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Replica gun found in school

Incident. Calgary student arrested and charged less than a week after high-profile school shooting in Newtown, Conn.

JEREMY NOLAIS
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Police seized a replica handgun and arrested a 16-year-old student at a northwest Calgary school Wednesday after at least one of his peers reported him showing off the realistic-looking, mock firearm.

The seizure took place shortly after 1 p.m. Wednesday at William Aberhart High School after police became aware of the replica gun — which students believed was real — while assisting with the separate arrest of two other students at the school wanted in relation to a robbery in Cochrane, said police Const. James Dore, who works as the school resource officer.

"They (staff) knew who it was and we had him in seconds.... If there were concerns about his whereabouts, normally they would go into full lockdown the moment they had credible information," Dore said.

Staff and police only became aware of the firearm Wednesday, Dore added, but a 17-year-old student at the school, whose name Metro has withheld to protect his safety, said the same student showed him a handgun in the school cafeteria during the last class period on Tuesday.

"He pulled it out of his bag a little bit, cocked it and put it back in," the student said.

Reports of the replica firearm come less than a week after a gunman opened fire at a school in Newtown, Conn., killing 20 students and six staff members.

Regardless of whether or not the gun was real, the incident generated concern among parents waiting to pick their kids up at Aberhart Wednesday afternoon.

"It's absolutely horrifying," said mother Alana Donohoe. "Someone was on the radio the other day saying, 'Make sure you hug your kids because you never know what can happen.'"

Charges are pending against the 16-year-old, Dore said, but he was not in possession of the bag at the time of arrest. CBE spokesperson Karen Drummond said it was found in a locker.

"Once they (staff) located it, they didn't go into lockdown because there was no threat to the school population in any way," Drummond said.

The student was eventually released to his father and will be suspended, Drummond added.

Quoted

"It's absolutely horrifying.... Someone was on the radio the other day saying, 'Make sure you hug your kids because you never know what can happen.'"

Alana Donohoe, mother of student at William Aberhart High School

Students at William Aberhart High School are seen leaving Wednesday afternoon. Earlier in the day, staff found a replica handgun stashed in a bag. A 16-year-old student now faces charges and will be suspended in relation to the incident. JEREMY NOLAIS/METRO

City teacher under arrest

A female Calgary teacher has been arrested for allegedly carrying on a sexual relationship with a 14-year-old male student PAGE 4

'Our new lives together'

It's a wedding 14 years in the making and involves overcoming homelessness and addiction, but for this couple it's finally happening PAGE 8

Police ask public for help

Cops are asking the public to help identify three suspects believed to be running a credit-card scam that involves prepaid Visa gift cards PAGE 10

Anger in India over gang rape

The hours-long gang rape and near-fatal beating of a 23-year-old student on a bus in New Delhi triggers outrage across the country PAGE 14

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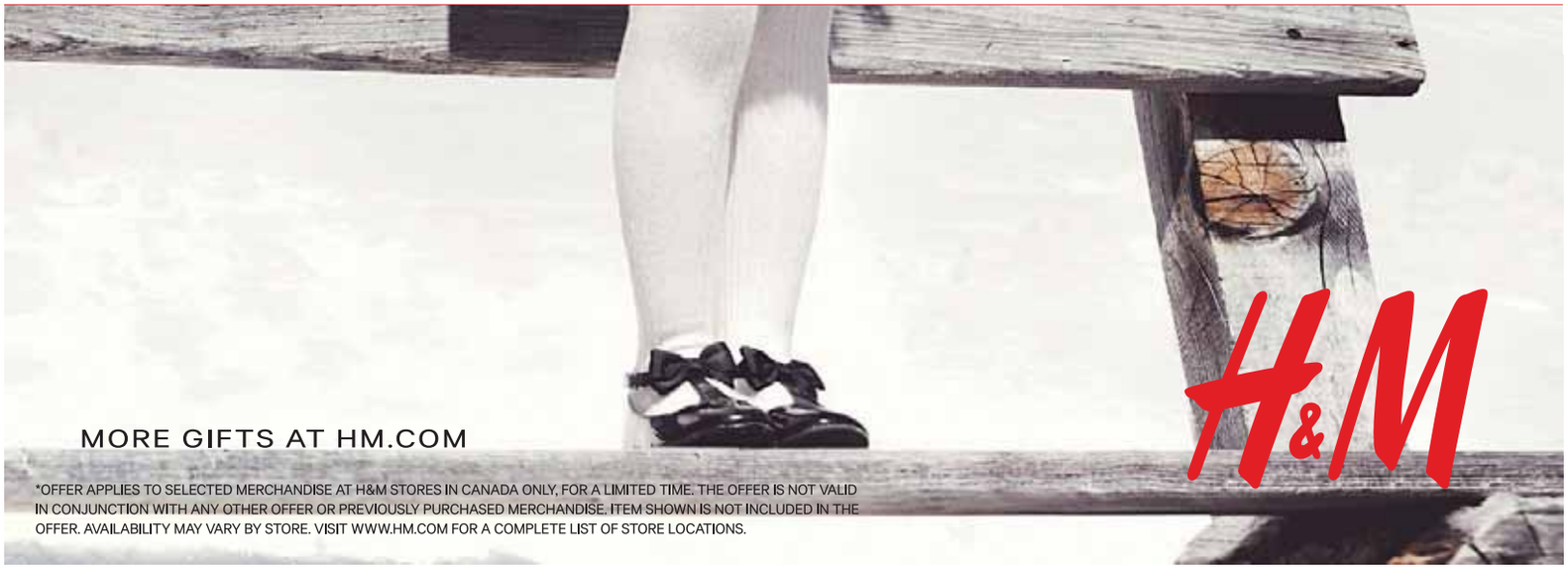

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Distracted drivers still issue despite legislation

Driving. Year-over-year statistics show increase in fines being laid for inattentive activities behind the wheel

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To some drivers, it's worth the risk. To others, it's an opportunity to be inventive.

But to Calgary police, the primary concern around distracted driving continues to be public safety. They report that, even 15 months after provincial legislation barring dangerous activities behind the wheel came into effect, many motorists still aren't heeding the message.

"You see all kinds of things," said Const. Mike Hagen. "One guy had literally tucked his phone into his ball cap ... there are some people that have taped their phones to the steering wheel."

The distracted driving legislation, which sees a $172 fine slapped on drivers who are talking on a handheld device or paying attention to things other than the road, was introduced in September 2011, but only warnings were given out for the first month.

Police have now tallied year-over-year data for the months of October and November indicating a 40 per cent rise in distracted-driving tickets this year compared to last.

"Some of that might have been officers still giving warnings early on," Hagen cautioned about the increase.

Calgary Police Chief Rick Hanson has made it clear he wants distracted drivers slapped with demerits on top of the fine and told Metro in a meeting earlier this month that a gradual strengthening of the legislation may be the best method to boost compliance.

Alberta Transportation Minister Ric McIver has said he will review the legislation but to date has refrained from offering a timeline for doing so.

"As soon as we have something to share, we will," McIver said earlier this month.

Hagen said the police traffic section is eyeing potential methods to do targeted enforcement for distracted driving, similar to photo radar and Checkstops used to nab and deter lead-footed and impaired drivers.

"We would love to get something like a scope or high-powered binoculars so we could pick them off," he said. "As soon as they (drivers) see a marked vehicle or uniform, the phone drops."

Quote

"I think some people are prepared to say, 'I do most of my work on the road, I'm a busy person. When I drive, that's dead time, so I am just going to balance off this $172 (ticket) with no demerit points by continuing to do business while driving down the road.'"

Police Chief Rick Hanson

Calgary Police Chief Rick Hanson told Metro in an interview that demerits should be added to the existing fines as penalties for distracted driving. METRO FILE

Caught in the act

Details on what police have caught motorists doing behind the wheel.

1. Between October 2011 and November 2012, Calgary police have laid a total of 6,623 tickets related to distracted driving. That number could shift slightly as reports are formalized.
2. Of those, 41 people were caught reading behind the wheel.
3. Another 186 were nabbed under a section reserved for general prohibited acts not otherwise specified. Examples provided by police include knitting and playing a musical instrument.
4. As well, 24 drivers were cited for having animals occupying a portion of the vehicle that impeded its safe operation.

Taken to hospital. Police officer one of two people injured in Deerfoot crash

Two people were taken to hospital Wednesday morning, including a veteran police officer, following a collision on Deerfoot Trail.

The crash happened around 11 a.m., shortly after the officer pulled over a minivan on the left side of Deerfoot Trail near McKnight Boulevard, according to police. Sgt. Bob Pugh said he was on the radio with the officer at the time and, about two minutes after the traffic stop was made, the officer's vehicle was rear-ended by a semi-trailer while the officer was inside.

The minivan was also involved in the collision. The officer and one person from the minivan were each taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries, according to an EMS spokesman Adam Loria.

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO CALGARY

A Calgary police officer sustained minor injuries after his pickup truck was rear-ended by a semi on Deerfoot Trail Wednesday morning. METRO

Under investigation

Apartment fire forces evacuation

Residents of a northwest apartment evacuated the building due to a late-night fire Tuesday, according to the fire department.

The fire broke out around 11:30 p.m. in the 2000 block of Ulster Road N.W. in the sixth floor of the 17-storey building.

METRO

517 lights out

Fewer streetlights now burned out

After the number of burned-out streetlights reached an all-time high earlier this year, the city now says the outages have been drastically reduced.

The number of burned-out lights stands at 517, the city announced Wednesday, down from a peak of 1,933 in mid-March. METRO

MyParking. CPA launches free app to make life easier

The city's parking authority has released a free iPhone app they say will make finding a parking spot in Calgary much easier.

The MyParking app, launched Wednesday, will allow customers to create a ParkPlus account and, from there, start and stop their parking sessions from their phones.

It will also allow users to scout out real-time parking availability in CPA parkades and view estimated on-street parking availability based on historical data as a reference.

The app also allows drivers to take a photo of their vehicle and plot it on a map so they don't forget where they've parked.

The app is currently only available for iPhone, but will eventually be made available for other platforms.

Additional information on the app can be found at calgaryparking.com. METRO

Staff Sgt. Kelly Campbell of the Calgary Police Service's Child Abuse Unit speaks to reporters about the arrest of a teacher on sexual assault and sexual interference charges. ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO CALGARY

Teacher arrested in sex scandal

Isolated incident. Police encourage anyone with info about inappropriate relationships between teachers and students to come forward

ROBSON FLETCHER
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A female Calgary teacher has been suspended with pay after being arrested for allegedly carrying on a sexual relationship with a 14-year-old male student.

Quoted

"We removed the teacher from the workplace so that there's not any concern for safety, which protects both the teacher and the students."

CBE chief communications officer Richard Peter

"She is in a position of authority, so, in the terms of the law, it cannot be consensual," Staff Sgt. Kelly Campbell of the Calgary Police Service's child-abuse unit said on Wednesday.

Campbell said a third party informed police of the relationship in early November and, through the course of their investigation, officers now believe it had been going on for roughly a year.

She said the teacher, who is in her 40s, was arrested on Tuesday and released on a promise to appear in court in late January to face charges of sexual assault and sexual interference with a child.

"We don't believe that there are any other victims in this case," Campbell said, adding that cases like this are "rare."

The Calgary Board of Education suspended the teacher Wednesday morning, said chief communications officer Richard Peter.

Peter said the CBE also sent an email to parents the same morning, to inform them of the suspension and the charges and that a substitute teacher is in place.

Peter added that the 14-year-old student is no longer at the school and is now "in another school in our system."

Police say they will keep the identity of the teacher confidential to protect the identity of the victim.

The teacher has a court date scheduled for Jan. 28, 2013.

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Cochrane

Students arrested for local liquor-store robbery

Two teens were arrested at William Aberhart High School after allegedly robbing a liquor store in Cochrane on Nov. 29, according to police.

With information provided by the Calgary Police Service, RCMP obtained four search warrants and arrested two 16-year-old male students at the school Wednesday.

The two teens were taken into custody and are facing robbery charges, as well as charges of disguising themselves with intent to commit an indictable offence. METRO

Breach of conditions

Teacher accused of sex with student faces new charges

Airdrie RCMP arrested a high school teacher who already stands accused of having a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old student on additional charges Wednesday.

John Christopher Miller, 35, was originally arrested in October after an investigation into his alleged relationship with a female student at George MacDougall High School in Airdrie.

Police say an officer noticed Miller's vehicle in the area of the school on Wednesday, and determined that he was still in contact with the teen, despite having strict conditions including no contact with the student.

He was charged with 12 counts of breach of recognizance, and one count of sexual interference, according to the RCMP. METRO

John Christopher Miller METRO FILE

Future of second sports centre now in question

Lease. City's soccer federation hopes to stay in control of North East Sports Facility and Subway Soccer Centre

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Uncertainty over who will operate Calgary's soccer centre could also jeopardize the future of another facility in the city, members of the local soccer federation warn.

A portion of an email provided to Metro that was addressed to Calgary Soccer Federation members from executive Shauna Aab states that the group took over the lease of the North East Sports Facility, located at 401-33rd St. N.E., in 2008 and pays $500,000 annually to Magellan Properties to maintain that agreement.

But now CSF's revenue intake has been called into question, as the City of Calgary invites new proposals to maintain the larger Subway Soccer Centre. The federation has run that facility for 20 years and intends to bid to do so again.

With regard to the North East facility, the email states: "The CSF would not be able to maintain the facility if CSF lost revenue from the loss of operations of the Subway Soccer Centre."

Both CSF president Angus Smith and treasurer Gary Steen acknowledged concerns about the northeast facility while fielding questions about future plans from parents and member associations Tuesday night.

"There's definitely a big question mark there," Smith said of the facility, adding that discussion of its future would be purely speculative at this point.

Ald. Andre Chabot was one of few on city council to support keeping the CSF in charge at the Subway Soccer Centre — and his ward includes the North East Sports Facility.

He said Wednesday he worries about potential impacts to operations that could come with a new leaseholder.

"They may come in with grandiose ideas and think they can achieve something only to find out after the fact they can't ... these guys, the current operators, at least know what returns they can expect," Chabot said. "They know what it takes to provide subsidized, lower-rate fields."

North East Sports Facility

- The North East Sports Facility maintains three soccer fields that are primarily used for training, as well as a basketball court, fitness centre and other facilities for visitors.
- A staff member said the facility sees 800,000 athletes and other visitors annually.

Ownership over The North East Sports Facility, run by the Calgary Soccer Federation, may change handst. JEREMY NOLAIS/METRO

Oil-price squeeze may force province to run deficit

Alberta Finance Minister Doug Horner said "some very tough choices" lie ahead for his government. ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

The price squeeze on heavy oil is gutting Alberta's bottom line and Finance Minister Doug Horner says it's now all hands on deck to cut spending and shelve projects.

"I'm very, very concerned about where those (oilsands) numbers are headed," Horner said outside his legislature office Wednesday.

"This is a situation that is actually affecting the Canadian GDP. It's that much of an impact on the Canadian economy."

Horner said everything except higher taxes or new taxes is being explored. Key projects such as Premier Alison Redford's proposed 140 new family-care clinics are still a priority but could also be up for review.

"Yesterday at cabinet I made the comment to all of our cabinet colleagues that they're going to have to make some very tough choices," said Horner.

But even with emergency austerity measures, the budget may not only end up in the red on the capital-spending side, as previously announced, but also on the operating side.

"My role is to do everything in my control to make sure that we meet the targets (of a balanced budget) that we have for next year," said Horner.

"Are you still confident you can meet that target?" he was asked. "Today, I'm very concerned," he replied.

The province runs a $40-billion budget with a quarter of its revenue from non-renewable resources.

Alberta is on track this year to run up a $3-billion deficit, which will be covered by the rapidly depleting Sustainability Fund.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Slashing prices

- Demand is falling from Canada's main customer, the United States, due in part to a struggling economy and a boom in light oil in North Dakota.
- As a result, said Horner, Alberta is being forced to sell at a discount. He suggested Alberta needs access to new customers in China, Mexico and Brazil.

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Mark and his longtime companion, Dolly Sutherland, will be married on Thursday after several people stepped forward to pay for the licence, rings and even a wedding dress. KATIE TURNER/METRO

Wedding bells to chime after 14 years of ups and downs

Stand by me. Couple are putting addictions behind them and starting a new life together

KATIE TURNER
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They've had only a few days to plan, but it's a wedding 14 years in the making.

Dolly Sutherland and her partner, Mark, met when they were both sober and working. In recent years, issues of addiction and homelessness plagued the couple, landing them at the Calgary Drop-In and Rehab Centre.

"As the years went by, addictions progressed and got worse," said Mark, who requested that his last name be withheld. "We built everything together, we lost everything together, and for her to still stand beside me … proves quite a bit."

Sutherland said the pair have been wanting to tie the knot for a while, but "we had too many things on our plate," she said.

As part of the Drop-In's annual Christmas Wish List — a list of clients' holiday requests, which can be sponsored online — the couple simply asked to be wed.

Calgarian Nichole Barwise knew she wanted to keep up her tradition of sponsoring a wish and immediately connected with the couple's story.

"They didn't want a night on the town … or a nice fancy laptop. They wanted to get married to each other," Barwise said.

She met Mark and Dolly at the registry on Tuesday to pay for their marriage licence. But before she could get her debit card out, she found out one of the registry staff members had paid for the licence. Moments later, another employee offered a recently purchased wedding dress for Sutherland to wear.

On Wednesday, with tears in their eyes, the couple opened a donated pair of wedding bands from Troy Shoppe Jewellers.

"These are happy tears," Sutherland said.

Now living in an apartment, she said getting married is one more achievement to be proud of.

"We can put the past away and start our new lives together," she said. "They made our wish come true, and that means a lot to us."

The couple will be married on Thursday at the Scarboro United Church.

From joy to despair and back again

"We built everything together, we lost everything together, and for her to still stand beside me … proves quite a bit."

Mark, Drop-In Centre client

Interview. Wildrose prepared to better fund cities: Smith

The Wildrose party was rebuffed by Alberta cities in the last election because of controversial candidates but has a strong urban agenda that would let cities stand on their own, Leader Danielle Smith says.

The Wildrose garnered 17 seats in April but not a single one in Calgary or Edmonton.

Smith said two candidates who made controversial comments on homosexuality and race sank the party's chances.

"It gave the impression that our party was looking to the past, rather than to the future," she said. "I think it is unfortunate that we ended up with two candidates who branded our entire party."

She said the Wildrose would deliver the financial stability that municipalities are now demanding by transferring 10 per cent of provincial tax revenues directly to them, with no strings attached.

Despite the government's increased funding to cities, Smith said, municipalities are still treated as beggars at the province's table.

"They still have to go begging, cap in hand, and hope that the province approves the critical infrastructure in their cities."

She said she doesn't favour new tax powers for municipalities, because it would be inefficient and the province can raise the money more easily.

"If you have 400 municipalities all trying 400 different types of taxes, all hiring 400 tax administrations, what's the point?" she said.

The next time out, she added, the party will be much more careful about its candidates. Members are already thinking about the next election, she said.

RYAN TUMILTY/METRO

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Police are seeking to identify and speak with these three people, who were seen in the Shamrock Hotel shortly before it caught fire on Aug. 28. METRO FILE, HANDOUTS

3 people sought in Shamrock Hotel fire investigation

Four months later.
Police continue to seek information about blaze that forced firefighters to rescue hotel guests through broken windows

ROBSON FLETCHER
robson.fletcher@metronews.ca

Three people captured by security cameras at the Shamrock Hotel shortly before a major fire struck the building this summer are now being sought by police.

Staff Sgt. Bruce Walker stopped short of describing the two men and one woman as suspects in the suspicious blaze but said police would simply like to identify and speak to them.

"After going through all the video, the scene examination and speaking with the management, as well as the witnesses at the scene, these are three individuals that we obviously haven't been able to get in contact with, due to not knowing who they are," Walker said.

"So we're hoping that by speaking to them that will further the investigation."

Arson investigators have been paying special attention to this particular fire, Walker added, due to the potential for loss of life.

Eleven people fled the three-alarm fire that broke out at the Ramsay hotel early in the morning of Aug. 28.

Due to thick smoke blocking the hallway in one section of the building, firefighters had to rescue five people from the second floor by ladder through broken windows.

Three people were treated for smoke inhalation, but there were no major injuries.

The blaze is estimated to have caused more than $1 million in damage.

Despite all the police involvement to date, Walker said the cause of the fire has still not yet been determined.

"At this point, we're still involved in the investigation from an arson perspective," he said.

Fire details

- Police believe the fire started on the second floor of the Shamrock Hotel, but the precise cause is still under investigation.
- Firefighters immediately smashed second-storey windows when they arrived at the scene on Aug. 28 in order to free hotel guests trapped by smoke.
- Anyone with information about this incident or these people is asked to call Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-8477.

Quoted

"These are three individuals that we obviously haven't been able to get in contact with, due to not knowing who they are."

Staff Sgt. Bruce Walker on three persons of interest in the Shamrock Hotel fire investigation

Credit-card scam believed to be part of larger fraud ring

Police are asking the public to help identify three suspects believed to be running a credit-card scam that involves the bulk purchase of prepaid Visa gift cards.

Det. Dean Nichol said the scammers have been going around to Calgary businesses and buying gift cards with fraudulent credit cards that have non-functional electronic chips but working magnetic strips that contain data skimmed from real credit cards.

"In some cases they will go into a store and they'll buy possibly eight to 10 cards at a time, each with, say, a $100 limit," Nichol said.

Police believe this may be part of a larger fraud ring. Nichol said there have been two reports of the scam within Calgary and additional reports in Edmonton and elsewhere in Alberta.

The male suspect is described as white and about 20 to 25 years old, of medium height and build, with brown hair and brown eyes.

The female suspects are both described as being short and in their late teens or early 20s. One woman has black hair just below the shoulders, while the other has black hair to her waist.

Anyone with information is asked to call Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-8477.

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

Police released these images of the suspects in a credit-card scam. CONTRIBUTED

Mosasaur

Alberta scientist finds giant fossil of freshwater lizard in Hungary

It grew up to six metres long, and its toothy mouth and long, crocodile-like body was the terror of ancient rivers hundreds of millions of years ago.

University of Alberta biologist Michael Caldwell says he's discovered a brand-new type of mosasaur — a long-extinct family of marine lizards unrelated to dinosaurs — in Hungary.

Caldwell's is the first mosasaur ever found that lived in freshwater and would have been able to walk on land.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

10-month suspension.

Local family physician punished for having sex with one of his patients

A Calgary family doctor is being suspended for having sex with one of his patients.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta says Dr. William Healley will be suspended for a minimum of 10 months, starting Jan. 1.

The college says he must also pay the $35,000 cost of the investigation into his misconduct and meet other conditions before he can resume his medical practice.

A college tribunal also found Healley guilty of unbecoming conduct for continuing to treat the woman's two young children during the time they were having a sexual relationship.

When he goes back to work, Healley will need a chaperon present when treating female patients.

He must also attend a course about proper boundaries between physicians and patients for a minimum of five years. THE CANADIAN PRESS

High price to pay

$35,000

On top of his suspension, Dr. William Healley must pay the $35,000 cost of the investigation into his misconduct

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There are a few ways to avoid getting into the seasonal red. LISA WILTON/METRO

‘Brokemas’ a genuine concern for generous Canadian families

Keep a jingle in your pocket. MRU associate professor says to put away the credit cards to avoid holiday debt

LISA WILTON
lisa.wilton@metronews.ca

Financial debt is a very real problem for many families this time of year.

Unfortunately, that fine line between Christmas and “Brokemas” is easy to cross, and each year hundreds of thousands of Canadians find themselves struggling with huge credit-card bills after purchasing gifts for family and friends.

To avoid post-Christmas bankruptcy, Jim Fischer, associate professor and chair of finance at Mount Royal University’s Bissett School of Business, says it’s best not to use a credit card at all.

“Don’t spend money you don’t have, and don’t put it on a credit card,” he says.

“I know it’s easier said than done ... but you have to budget for things, generally.”

Fischer says when it comes to buying presents, putting needs ahead of wants will save money in the long run.

“It’s a waste of money if you buy a gift that someone may want but probably won’t use after a while,” he says.

Unless you have plenty of spare cash to throw around, Fischer suggests putting a cap on the amount of money you spend on gifts for people outside your circle of close family and friends.

A $10 to $20 Tim Hortons or Starbucks card, for example, might seem impersonal, but it’s actually a surprisingly thoughtful gift.

“It’s the gift that keeps on giving,” says Fischer. “You can use it a few times. The point of a gift is thinking of the person. It gives them the opportunity to go out and have a free coffee on you.”

If you find yourself with Christmas debt, the first thing you need to do is make a payment on your credit card — or cards — as quickly as possible.

“If that means scrimping on other things, then do it,” Fischer says.

“You can still put items on your credit card to get points but consider what cash you have to spend that month and don’t go over that amount. Never carry credit-card debt. The interest rates are atrocious.”

Good advice

“Don’t spend money you don’t have.... I know it’s easier said than done.”

Jim Fischer, associate professor and chair of finance at MRU’s Bissett School of Business

Money-saving tips

- **Do a family gift-exchange,** in which each member buys for just one person, or put a spending cap on presents.
- **If you have teenagers,** take part of their clothing budget for the year and give them the cash. Then take them on a Boxing Day shopping trip to take advantage of the sales.
- **Shop online.** It’s easy to find discounted items on the Internet, and many online stores will ship their products to you within a week.

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India incensed over gang rape on bus

Delhi. Protesters, politicians demand action after attack shocks a nation

The hours-long gang rape and near-fatal beating of a 23-year-old student on a bus in New Delhi triggered outrage and anger across India on Wednesday as protesters demanded action from authorities who have long ignored persistent violence and harassment against women.

In the streets and in Parliament, calls rose for stringent and swift punishment against those who attack women, including a proposal to make rapists eligible for the death penalty. As the calls for action grew louder, two more gang rapes were reported, including one in which a 10-year-old victim was killed.

Thousands of demonstrators clogged the streets in front of New Delhi's police headquarters, protested near Parliament and rallied outside a major university. Angry university students set up roadblocks across the city, causing massive traffic jams.

Hundreds rallied outside the home of the city's top elected official before police dispersed them with water cannons, a move that earned further condemnation from opposition leaders, who accused the government of being insensitive.

"We want to jolt people awake from the cosy comfort of their cars. We want people to feel the pain of what women go through every day," said Aditi Roy, a Delhi University student.

Police on Wednesday fished out the body of a 10-year-old girl from a canal in Bihar state's Saharsa district. Police Supt. Ajit Kumar Satyarthi said the girl had been gang-raped, killed and her body dumped in the canal. Police were investigating and a breakthrough was expected soon, Satyarthi said.

The 23-year-old victim lay in critical condition in the hospital with severe internal injuries, doctors said.

Police said six men raped the woman and savagely beat her and her companion with iron rods on a bus driving around the city — passing through several police checkpoints — before stripping them and dumping them on the side of the road on Sunday night.

Delhi police chief Neeraj Kumar said four men have been arrested and a search was underway for the other two.

Sonia Gandhi, head of the ruling Congress Party, visited the victim, promised swift action against the perpetrators and called for police to be trained to deal with crimes against women.

In New Delhi and across India, the outpouring of anger is unusual in a country where attacks against women are rarely prosecuted.

Opposition politicians shouted slogans and protested outside Parliament and called for making rape a capital crime. Cutting across party affiliations, lawmakers demanded the government announce a plan to safeguard women in the city.

Analysts say crimes against women are on the rise as more young women leave their homes to join the workforce in India's booming economy, even as deep-rooted social attitudes that women are inferior remain unchanged.

Many families look down on women, viewing the girl child as a burden that forces them to pay a huge dowry to marry her off.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

An Indian woman shouts slogans outside the Delhi police headquarters during Wednesday's protest in New Delhi following the rape of a 23-year-old student. ALTAF QADRI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Yet another attack

On the same day of the protests, a young girl in India's Banka district of Bihar was allegedly raped by four men.

- The 14-year-old was in critical condition after the attack, a district education officer said.
- The suspected rapists have been identified, but police have yet to make any arrests.

Quoted

"I feel it is sick what is happening across the country, and it needs to stop."

Smitha, a 32-year-old protester, criticizing the Indian mindset on sexual assault and violence against women.

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Pedophile probe absolves BBC bosses of cover-up

Institutional chaos and confusion — but not a cover-up — were to blame for the BBC's disastrous handling of pedophilia allegations involving one of its best-known children's television personalities, an internal review found on Wednesday.

The review, carried out by former Sky News boss Nick Pollard, absolved BBC executives of trying to bury a potentially embarrassing story, saying that weak management and poor leadership were to blame for the fact that a planned exposé of the late TV star Jimmy Savile never aired on the flagship Newsnight program.

When the rival ITV network broadcast a similar exposé in October about Savile, who died in 2011 at the age of 84, the BBC came under fire for both harbouring an alleged serial sex abuser for decades and killing its own story about him.

"The Newsnight investigators got the story right," Pollard said. "They had found clear and compelling evidence that Jimmy Savile was a pedophile."

He said the decision by news executives to scrap the item "was clearly flawed, and the way it was taken was wrong, though I believe it was taken in good faith."

Nick Pollard, author of a report on the BBC's handling of a pedophile scandal, speaks to the media about his findings on Wednesday in London. CHRIS RADBURN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The review said the BBC was thrown into disarray when allegations that Savile was a serial sexual predator were made public, taking more than a month to get a handle on the situation.

The scandal has since metastasized, tainting the reputation of the BBC. It also forced the resignation of the BBC's new director-general, George Entwistle, and raised questions about its former leader, Mark Thompson, who has since become chief executive at the New York Times.

The BBC's decision to cancel its initial investigation in December 2011 over the objections of its reporters was one of the scandal's most embarrassing episodes, especially as it preceded a glowing tribute to Savile's career broadcast the same month. The timing and the circumstances of the cancellation raised questions about whether senior executives tried to bury the story to protect the corporation's reputation.

The report published Wednesday absolved the executives of that — the most serious — charge. The review cost the BBC $3.3 million US.

The report does not appear to challenge Thompson's account of his role in the scandal — and Chris Patten, head of the BBC Trust, said after the review was published that he has "no reason at all for disbelieving" the former director-general.

Since the ITV documentary aired, scores of women have come forward, alleging they were abused by Savile when they were underage, sometimes in BBC dressing rooms. Police say Savile is a suspect in 199 crimes recorded so far, including dozens of cases of rape.

Two additional internal inquiries are still in the works.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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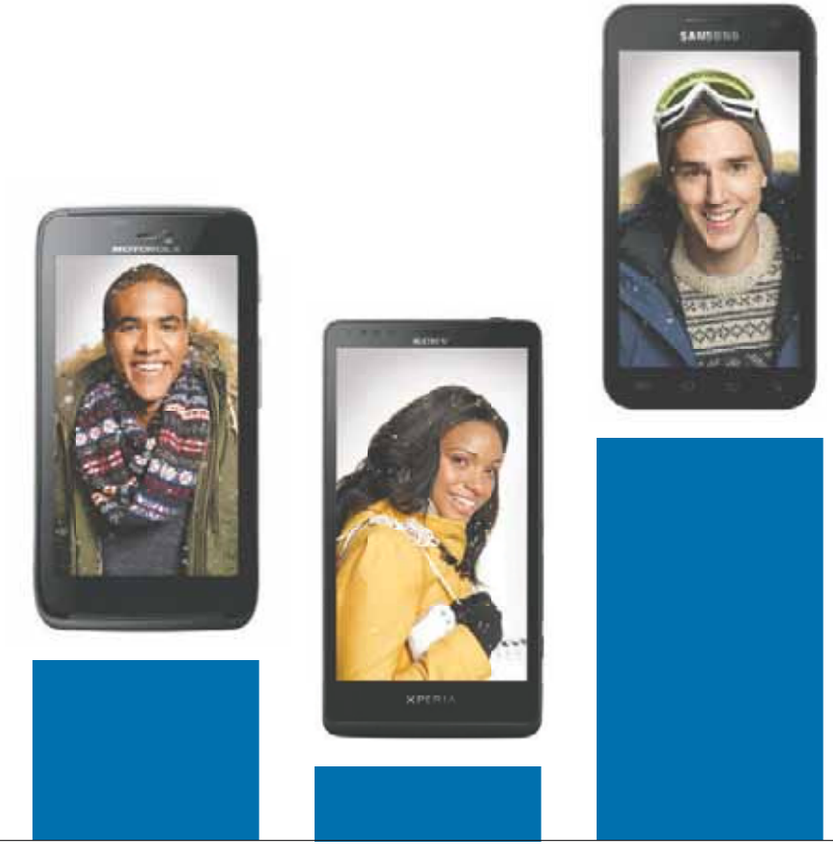

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Albino Rhino beer sparks human rights case in British Columbia

Bitter brew. Woman who suffers albinism says beer served at Earls Restaurants embarrassed her

A British Columbia woman who suffers from albinism wants the name Albino Rhino beer removed from 24 Earls Restaurants in B.C.

And the province's Human Rights Tribunal has agreed to hear her case.

The complaint was filed by Ikponwosa Ero, a 31-year-old immigrant from Nigeria, who argues it is offensive to brand a product after a disability or medical condition.

Ero was born with albinism, a condition marked by absence of pigment in the hair, eyes and skin, leaving people with pale skin, legally blind and sensitive to light.

"This is a very important case for our clients," lawyer Randy Kaardal of Hunter Litigation Chambers in Vancouver told the Torstar News Service in an interview.

Albino Rhino beer, right, marketed by Earls, has been sold for the past 25 years. The human rights complaint was launched a few months after Earls introduced a promotion for chicken wings.
RIGHT: CONTRIBUTED/EARLS CURTIS G RUSH
ABOVE: TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

"It would be a very important milestone to enhance the ability of people to participate in society and (to bring) this to the attention of the public."

Ero is a researcher with Under the Same Sun, a charity dedicated to helping those with the condition.

The basis for the complaint is that albinos are persecuted in Africa and stigmatized in other parts of the world.

In some African countries, there have been reports that albinos are murdered and their body parts used in potions sold by witch doctors.

Ero said she first saw the Albino Rhino beer when she was served water at an Earls with the name of the beer on the glass.

She hid the glass from her university friends out of embarrassment. "I knew that they would associate the brand with me because I have albinism," she explained.

The human rights complaint was launched a few months after Earls introduced a promotion for chicken wings, which was marked as Albino Wing Wednesdays on April 27, 2011.

Mark Barry, vice-president of human resources at Earls, released a statement on Monday defending the use of the name Albino Rhino, which is marketed using a white rhinoceros. They have been selling this pale ale brand of beer for 25 years.

Changing

Cate Simpson, spokesperson for Earls, says that Earls continues to use the name Rhino but has been slowly changing its logo to reflect only the rhino and not the word albino.

- "All newer glassware has only the rhino on it," Simpson said. "The name 'Albino' is being phased out and will eventually be removed from all our beer products."
- Earls also markets Albino Rhino beer across its 64 restaurants in Canada.

"It did not occur to us that the name would be associated with albinism, nor did it occur to us it would offend, and in the 25 years we have been serving this beer we have never had a complaint about the name, until now," Barry said.

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Man who killed Manitoba girl was earlier deemed high risk

The inquiry into the death of Manitoba girl Phoenix Sinclair has been told one of the people who killed her had already been deemed to be at an extreme high risk for violence.

Karl McKay's former probation officer says she felt so threatened during a meeting with him in 1999 that she warned Winnipeg Child and Family Services about him.

Miriam Browne says McKay had been convicted of domestic violence for a second time and skipped out on treatment programs and meetings with her.

She says that during one meeting, she felt physically intimidated and ensured that there were no more meetings without another worker present.

Browne wrote to a social worker who was dealing with McKay's partner at the time to warn the worker that McKay was likely to be very violent again.

Phoenix Sinclair in a family photo released by the Commission of Inquiry looking into her death. THE CANADIAN PRESS/CONTRIBUTED

The inquiry has already heard that other warnings about McKay went unheeded before he and Samantha Kematch, Phoenix's mother, killed the girl in 2005.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Saskatchewan

No jail time for First Nation chief

The chief of a Saskatchewan First Nation, who pleaded guilty to violating a probation order not to drink, has been given a four-month conditional sentence.

Stewart Cody Baptiste of the Red Pheasant First Nation was also placed on six months probation when he was sentenced this week.

The Crown had argued for a jail sentence of up to 50 days, but Baptiste's lawyer says he hopes the lenient sentence will encourage his client to get the help he needs to stop drinking.

Court heard Baptiste was charged after he showed apparent signs of drinking when he was spotted at a bar in late October.

Baptiste received a suspended sentence and six months probation in June for driving tickets and breaches of probation related to drinking.

He is also scheduled to face trial next year on charges of impaired driving and refusing a breath test in 2010. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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He's the Cosmo Canuck! Hadfield blasts into space

Up, up and away. 'It's a great day for Canada,' says our Governor General after successful launch from Kazakhstan

No sleeping, please — you're spacemen. Russian cosmonaut Roman Romanenko, left, U.S. astronaut Tom Marshburn and Canada's Chris Hadfield have put on their spacesuits at the Baikonur Cosmodrome and play a little snoozing joke on the media. Next stop: The International Space Station.
SHAMIL ZHUMATOV/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Now call him Cosmo Chris.

Chris Hadfield has successfully blasted off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

He was on his way Wednesday on a mission to become the first Canadian to command the International Space Station.

Hadfield is travelling to the space station on board a Russian Soyuz capsule for a five-month visit to the giant orbiting space lab.

He is sharing the trip to the space station with NASA astronaut Tom Marshburn and Russian cosmonaut Roman Romanenko. They're expected to arrive Friday.

Gov. Gen. David Johnston called Hadfield's launch "a great day for Canada, a great day for the world of discovery and innovation."

He joined the families of Canadian Space Agency employees at its HQ south of Montreal to watch the event on a giant TV screen.

"We're so proud that Chris Hadfield now is up in space — the first Canadian to be commanding the space station in March," he said.

"And now we simply pray for a continued safe mission and a safe return."

During his stay, Hadfield, an avid guitar player, plans to do some strumming to help him deal with homesickness.

The 53-year-old space veteran will also be involved with more than 130 experiments, including Micro-flow, a Canadian blood-sampling experiment which he compared to a hospital in a box.

Hadfield will become the first Canadian to command the space station during the second half of his mission.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Smarten up. IQ tests are just too simple by half, researcher warns

A new study released Wednesday suggests IQ tests aren't all they're cracked up to be.

"I think IQ tests are a massive over-simplification," said Adam Hampshire, one-half of the team of researchers who debunked the IQ myth.

"I would be incredibly skeptical of their results."

Traditional IQ tests favour one type of intelligence, said Hampshire. But people can be smart in multiple ways.

Hampshire and his partner Adrian Owen, from Western University's Brain and Mind Institute, created a new test that was able to gauge a person's intelligence in a variety of streams.

It was posted online and gathered tens of thousands of hits in just a few weeks.

"The day the initial trial went live, thousands of people signed on and they broke it," said Hampshire. "People started emailing their scores and putting them on Facebook, challenging their friends and it went viral.

"It was exhilarating and remarkably stressful."

The massive response gave the duo a broad sample of information about people from around the world aged 12 to 70.

The study found that there are three main types of intelligence. One relates to short-term memory, another deals with reason and logic, and the last shows a person's strength at variable testing.

AMANDA GRANT/
FOR METRO IN LONDON, ONT.

How do you rate?

The average person scores 70 to 130 on an intelligence quotient test.

- **The genius.** Albert Einstein had a score of 160 and was a member of the high IQ society, as is Stephen Hawking with the same score.
- **Take a test.** Visit cambridgebrainsciences.com/the IQ challenge to take the new test and see where you stand on the intelligence spectrum.

A new-year bow tie awaits Ikea monkey

Yasmin Nakhuda has everything ready for her little monkey to come home:

A tiny Santa Claus suit for Christmas, a bow tie for New Year's and a cottage rented in Kawartha Lakes, where it's not yet illegal to own a monkey.

On Thursday she'll be asking a court to return Darwin swiftly.

On Dec. 9, Darwin was found wandering in a north Toronto Ikea parking lot.

A photo of him in a faux-shearling coat soon made its way to Twitter and from there spread around the world.

It even landed Darwin a nod from The Guardian newspaper in its 10 fashion moments of the year.

Bylaw officials asked Nakhuda to surrender the animal and fined her $240 under the Toronto Municipal Code for keeping a prohibited animal.

The opposing side in her court case is requesting an adjournment, something that would give Kawartha Lakes time to enact an exotic-animals ban that is already in the pipeline.

Yasmin Nakhuda leads a protest Wednesday at a Toronto Animal Services office in a bid to get her pet monkey Darwin back. Darwin became an international viral sensation after being found in an Ikea parking lot.
TARA WALTON/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Speaking outside a Toronto Animal Services location Wednesday, Nakhuda talked about the trauma.

"Unless you've owned a primate, you cannot understand what it is to lose one," said Nakhuda, who works as a real-estate lawyer.

About 30 supporters, many friends and family members, attended a protest Wednesday at the Toronto Animal Services location.

Nakhuda's children — 16-year-old Omar and 12-year-old Misha — held signs that featured a picture of Darwin behind bars and read: "Free Darwin now!"

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Top court rules

Big unions lose fight for $28B

The Supreme Court of Canada says several major public unions are not entitled to a $28-billion pension surplus the government hived off to help pay down the deficit.

The unanimous high court ruled 9-0 that the government is not obliged to return funds to the public-sector unions.

The unions argued the government improperly took their money from the mandatory, defined-benefit plans.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Youth now key

Feds make point on immigration

The points system used to decide who can immigrate to Canada is getting a makeover.

The new judging criteria for the federal skilled-worker program will award more points to younger immigrants and change the way the government looks at work experience and education.

The way points are allocated for language ability will also change.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Recovering

Snowboarder lost for two days

A 33-year-old snowboarder from Ottawa is recovering after being rescued from a wilderness area north of Vancouver where he was stranded for two days.

Sebastien Boucher got lost Sunday after straying out of bounds near the Cypress Mountain ski area.

Initial attempts to find him were hampered by poor weather and the risk of avalanches. THE CANADIAN PRESS/NEWS 1130/CKNW

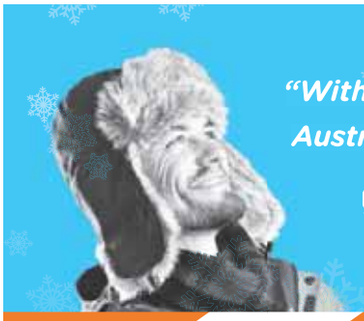
We're not so jolly

Happy? You're in Latin America

The world's happiest people aren't in Qatar, the richest country by most measures. They aren't in Japan, the nation with the highest life expectancy. Canada doesn't make the top 10.

A poll released Wednesday of nearly 150,000 people around the world says seven of the world's 10 countries with the most upbeat attitudes are in Latin America.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



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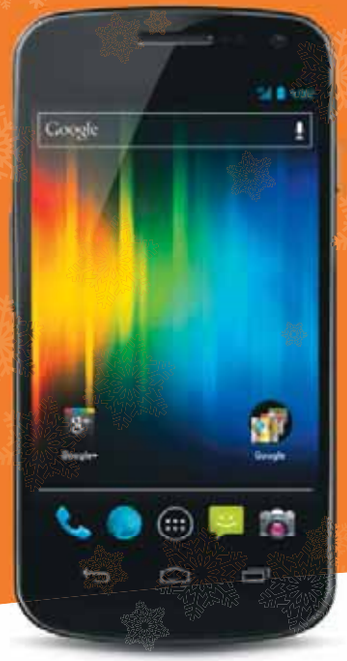

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Aussie minister marries abroad after country nixes gay marriage

An Australian first.
Denied at home, politician weds partner in Spain, which had its same-sex-marriage law upheld in November

A prominent gay Australian politician married his longtime partner Wednesday in Spain, two months after his country voted down a proposal to enact same-sex-marriage legislation.

Ian Hunter, the social-inclusion minister for the state of South Australia, said he was disappointed that his marriage to artist Leith Semmens won't be legal in Australia, but said the two decided they couldn't wait for their country to approve a gay-marriage law.

"Without a doubt it's inevitable in Australia, but you're looking at six or seven years, and me and my partner weren't willing to wait that long," Hunter said before he and Semmens were married at an art gallery in the town of Jun.

Mayor Jose Antonio Rodriguez officiated at the ceremony attended by more than a dozen friends and relatives. In accordance with a local tradition, the couple kissed for 17 seconds, which were counted out loud by the guests.

Hunter, 52, is believed to be the first sitting member of an Australian legislative body to marry a gay partner. He's part of the ruling Labor Party and he became a South Australian state cabinet minister last year.

The party's national conference in 2011 reversed its opposition to gay marriage, but Prime Minister Julia Gillard remains opposed. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Government out of touch?

- Legislation that would have recognized same-sex marriages was defeated in the Australian House of Representatives in September in a 98-48 vote.
- But opinion polls consistently show that most Australians support same-sex marriage.

Australian Minister Ian Hunter, left, and Leith Semmens kiss during a marriage ceremony in the Pabellon de los Artes centre in the town of Jun, Spain, Wednesday. Hunter, the social-inclusion minister for the state of South Australia, said he couldn't wait for his nation to legalize same-sex marriage before marrying his longtime partner. The Australian government recently rejected a proposal to enact gay-marriage legislation. SERGIO TORRES/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Northern Ireland politicians threatened amid flag dispute

Loyalists hold a British flag inside the grounds of Belfast City Hall in Northern Ireland on Dec. 3. PETER MORRISON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Five Northern Ireland politicians received letters containing bullets Wednesday as an extremist Protestant campaign of death threats and illegal street protests escalated over Belfast City Council's decision to stop flying the British flag year-round.

Hours later, an off-duty police officer narrowly avoided being shot when confronted by a gunman outside his home in the mainly Protestant town of Bangor. No group claimed responsibility.

About 40 police have been injured during the past three weeks' street clashes with Protestant extremists, who have issued threats against both police and politicians.

Typically, however, gun attacks on British security forces are committed by Irish Republican Army splinter groups from the Irish Catholic side of the community.

The five letters containing live bullets were intercepted by security screening staff at the Stormont Parliamentary Building in east Belfast, the centre of Northern Ireland's 5 1/2-year-old unity government.

Three officials from the cross-community Alliance Party were targets of the threats. Alliance has borne the brunt of Protestant anger after its Belfast councillors cast the deciding votes Dec. 3 restricting the U.K. flag's display to just 18 official days each year at Belfast City Hall.

Such issues of symbolism frequently inflame sectarian passions in Northern Ireland, where Protestants mainly want to stay in the United Kingdom and Catholics want to unite with the Republic of Ireland.

Two lawmakers from Sinn Fein, the Irish nationalist party that represents most of the Catholic minority, also were targeted with bullets. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Scramble for solutions

- The leaders of all Northern Ireland parties planned to meet Thursday to discuss possible solutions to the flag-flying dispute.

Toledo, Ohio

Ex-Marine admits mosque hate crime was payback

A former U.S. Marine admitted Wednesday that he broke into an Ohio mosque and set fire to a prayer rug because he wanted revenge for the killings of American troops overseas.

Randy Linn pleaded guilty to hate-crime charges, saying he'd become enraged after seeing images of wounded soldiers in the news.

"Every day you turn on the TV, you see Muslims trying to kill Americans," said Linn, a truck driver from Indiana.

When asked by a federal judge whether he thought all Muslims are terrorists, he answered: "I'd say most of them are."

A deal between prosecutors and Linn, 52, calls for him to be sentenced to 20 years next April. He pleaded guilty to intentionally damaging and destroying religious property and two gun-related charges.

U.S. District Judge Jack Zouhary told Linn that his acts were an attack on all places of religion.

"You are no better than the terrorists or extremists you sought to punish," Zouhary said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Election

Israeli Arabs cynical about vote

Israeli Arab activist Rasool Saada is crisscrossing the country to encourage fellow Arab citizens to vote in Jan. 22 parliamentary elections, convinced they can make a difference. Numerically, he's right. Historically, it hasn't worked out that way.

Arabs make up about a fifth of Israel's population, but their voter turnout has been low. Many Arabs are disillusioned with politics, alienated as a minority in a Jewish state and dissatisfied with squabbling representatives. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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New online scam holds computers hostage

Cybercrime.
'Ransomware' locks your data, scares you into paying and may soon hit cellphones and businesses, experts say

Visit a porn site and you could have your computer locked down and an online ransom demanded as part of a security threat now expected to spread to other areas of the cyberworld in 2013.

It's called "ransomware" and the idea is to scare computer users into paying money to get their machine working again and their data back, said Kevin Haley of Symantec Corp., maker of software security programs.

"The scam is usually, 'Hey we see that you have pornography on your machine and we're the police and you're going to jail for it" — unless you pay a fine or "ransom," Haley said.

At risk

"It's not just going after people who visited pornographic sites, it's going after anybody."
Kevin Haley, director at software security company Symantec Corp.

That means being told online by cybercriminals to buy a prepaid card with a specific amount. The user enters the card's PIN on the computer keyboard's numeric pad, the only thing not locked down, Haley said.

Smaller corporations, executives and even individuals, all of whom may not have their data backed up, are at risk in 2013 as attackers broaden their base, he said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Security experts warn of "ransomware," where thieves can lock up your online data and demand payment for it. RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Jerusalem

Holy site receives half-a-billion in cheques

Worshippers usually leave notes to the Almighty at one of Judaism's holiest sites. But half-a-billion dollars?

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinovitch, who oversees Jerusalem's Western Wall, said a worshipper found an envelope at the site Wednesday with 507 checks in the amount of about $1 million US each.

It's doubtful they can be cashed.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Break-in

Freeze! It's the ice-cream thief

Don't call this one a cold case.

Windsor, Ont., police are on the hunt for a man who broke into an ice-cream parlour on Sunday and helped himself to some soft serve.

Around 5 a.m., police were dispatched to the Twistee Treat kiosk. A surveillance video shows the man looking in the register before putting his mouth on the dispenser and flicking the switch.
LUKE SIMCOE/METRO ONLINE

Just dropping in — with some holiday cheer

U.S. Air Force Capt. Dereck Monnier, 36th Airlift Squadron pilot and aircraft commander, wears a Santa hat during a flight over Micronesia Tuesday as part of Operation Christmas Drop, a 61-year-old annual humanitarian airlift mission. The air crew carried a bundle of supplies donated from around the Pacific Region to help remote islanders who do not have access to modern industry and supply chains. U.S. AIR FORCE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

End of the world.

Tiny French village prepares for possible doomsday hordes

There has been an invasion of strangers in the sleepy hamlet of Bugarach, cradled in the foothills of the French Pyrénées.

According to doomsday theories, this tiny village in the south of France will be the earth's only safe haven on Dec. 21 — the date the world will come to an end, according to erroneous interpretations of the ancient Mayan calendar.

As Friday draws near, local police and the French military are surrounding the village and closing off roads, just in case apocalyptic hordes do show up.

They are preparing for every scenario, from cult suicides to doomsday tourists injuring themselves on the mountain rising behind the village — Pic de Bugarach — where some believe an alien saviour has been camped out for thousands of years.

This week the village's two main streets have indeed been filling with people from all corners of the globe — though not of the New Age or End of Days variety. No, the strangers being encountered are of a third kind.

"It's all journalists — CNN, BBC, CBS News," says Patrice Etienne, who owns Bugarach's only store and has been bombarded with media requests.

"It's the first time we have 200 journalists from all around the world coming for nothing. It's incredible."
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

This is the end

Here's what will happen in Pic de Bugarach on Dec. 21, according to the apocalyptically inclined:

- **An extra-terrestrial Noah's Ark.** An alien spaceship — presumably commanded by otherworldly humanitarians — will fly out from its subterranean hangar below Pic de Bugarach and beam up every person in the area, ferrying them to some intergalactic safe haven.

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Obama also won in 2008 as president-elect. TIME MAGAZINE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barack Obama Time's person of the year — a second time

Going for three?

President deserves the win as 'architect' of a new America, says Time editor

U.S. President Barack Obama has been named Time magazine's "person of the year" for 2012.

"We are in the midst of historic cultural and demographic changes, and Obama is both the symbol and in some ways the architect of this new America," Time editor Rick Stengel told NBC's Today show, where he announced the selection on Wednesday.

The short list for the honour included Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani teenager who was shot in the head for advocating for girls' education, as well as Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, Apple CEO Tim Cook and Italian physicist Fabiola Gianotti of CERN.

Obama also received the honour in 2008, when he was president-elect.

In an interview with Time, Obama said his re-election "may have been more satisfying a win than 2008."

"We've gone through a very difficult time," Obama told the magazine.

"The American people have rightly been frustrated at the pace of change, and the economy is still struggling, and this president we elected is imperfect; and yet, despite all that, this is who we want to be."

Time's "person of the year" is the person or thing that has most influenced culture and news during the past year, for good or for ill.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Previous winners

- **Last year,** Time honoured "the Protester," citing dissent across the Middle East that was felt worldwide, saying the protesters reshaped global politics.
- **In 2010,** Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg received the honour.
- **Earlier winners** include Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, Bono and former U.S. president George W. Bush.

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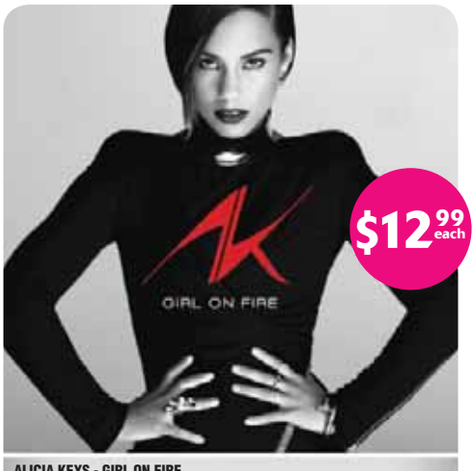

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Park Geun-hye elected South Korea's 1st female president

Landmark win. Newly elected leader is open to North Korea détente

Park Geun-hye, daughter of a divisive military strongman from South Korea's authoritarian era, was elected the country's first female president Wednesday, a landmark win that could mean a new drive to start talks with rival North Korea.

After five years of high tension under unpopular incumbent Lee Myung-bak, Park has vowed to pursue engagement and step up aid to North Korea, despite the latter's widely condemned long-range rocket launch last week.

North Korean state media, however, have repeatedly questioned the sincerity of Park's North Korea policy since she and Lee are from the same conservative party. Ties between the Koreas plummeted during Lee's term.

Many voters believe Lee's policies drove North Korea to renew nuclear and missile tests and to launch two attacks in 2010 that killed 50 Koreans.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

South Korea's first female president, Park Geun-hye, on Wednesday.

LEE JIN-MAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Damning Benghazi attack report. Three U.S. State Dept. officials resign

Three U.S. State Department officials resigned under pressure Wednesday, less than a day after a damning report blamed management failures for a lack of security at the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, where militants killed the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans on Sept. 11.

The resignations came as lawmakers expressed anger and frustration over the findings of an independent review panel, and the State Department struggled to find a balance between protecting its diplomats while allowing them to do their jobs connecting with people in high-risk posts.

An Obama administration official named Eric Boswell, the assistant secretary of state for diplomatic security, Charlene Lamb, the deputy assistant secretary responsible for embassy security, and Raymond Maxwell, the deputy assistant secretary of state who oversees the Maghreb nations of Libya, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss personnel matters publicly. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Syrian refugees need help to counter winter

Plight of children. Aid workers in Canada hope to hit the hearts and pocketbooks of their fellow citizens

The words of Syrian children, forced to flee violence in their own country, offer a bitter counterpoint to the cheery holiday spirit so many of their counterparts in Canada experience at this time of year.

Their grim testimonials leap from the pages of numerous reports from various international aid agencies that have struggled for months to draw attention to their suffering during the 21-month Syrian conflict, now a civil war.

Taken together, they tell the story of frigid youngsters huddling against sub-zero temperatures under thin blankets with no heat, their untreated coughs evolving into more serious untreated illnesses. School is non-existent. Hygiene is out the window — who can brave bathing when it's -4 C under the shower head?

"I do not want anything for myself, but I want you to give blankets to my little sister," a five-year-old Syrian boy living in a northern Iraq refugee camp tells Save the Children in its report. "She is three years old and very sick. She is crying and in pain, and I love her so I cannot see her cry."

The United Nations launched a $1-billion pre-Christmas emergency appeal Wednesday. The UN wants to stave off the latest threat to more than 500,000 Syrian refugees, the majority of them women and children: The prospect of a frigid winter in neighbouring Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon or Iraq.

The UN is also appealing for another $500 million to help the estimated two million displaced people inside Syria who have been driven from their homes as violence spreads.

Nicolas Moyer, the executive director of the Humanitarian Coalition, which includes the agencies CARE, Oxfam, Plan and Save the Children, said he thinks Canadians are generous people, but they don't necessarily appreciate the struggle of Syria's fleeing and traumatized civilians because most reporting focuses on the fighting of the civil war, and the largely unsuccessful international political machinations aimed at ending it. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Children, who fled their home with their family, peek from their tent at a man

MUHAMMED MUHEISEN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lebanon camps

Half of those fleeing are kids: Report

Veteran Canadian aid worker Dave Toycen, president of World Vision Canada, got a first-hand look when he travelled to Lebanon's Bekka Valley this past week.

Lebanon has hosted 150,000 fleeing Syrians, half of them children, says a World Vision report.

In addition to the hardship of winter, Toycen said the refugees face other problems. Almost one-third of them are undocumented so they have difficulty getting assistance from aid groups on the ground. Most children are languishing without access to school.

"As it gets colder, the kids get coughing, then it's pneumonia. This real concern is that this could turn into a much greater crisis, if this isn't dealt with," Toycen said. "It was four degrees the last two days we were there, and it gets down to minus 10." THE CANADIAN PRESS

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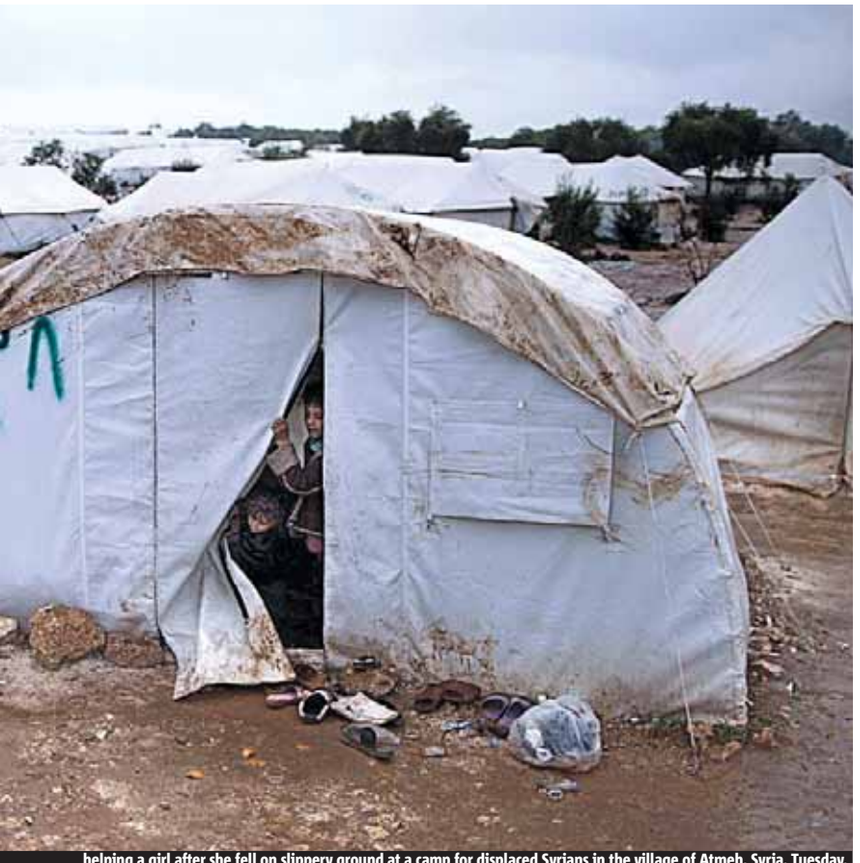

helping a girl after she fell on slippery ground at a camp for displaced Syrians in the village of Atmeh, Syria, Tuesday.

Human rights. UN expert committees give Canada failing grade

For Canada's international human rights standing, 2012 was an annus horribilis.

This year three UN expert committees rated the country's performance on meeting rights commitments — and returned a failing grade.

"These mandatory reviews are carried out every four or five years, and it just happened that this year Canada was the focus of three," said Alex Neve, who heads Amnesty International Canada. "It's a wake-up call that although we have things to be proud of, there are many fronts where we have long-standing issues that need to be addressed."

An Amnesty report released Wednesday says that committees on racial discrimination, prevention of torture and children's rights found "a range" of "ongoing and serious human rights challenges," especially for indigenous peoples.

"By every measure, be it respect for treaty and land rights, levels of poverty, average life spans, violence against women and girls, dramatically disproportionate levels of arrest and incarceration or access to government services such as housing, health care, education, water and child protection, indigenous peoples across Canada continue to face a grave human rights crisis," it said.

Rick Roth, spokesman for Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, said, "We are proud of the work we've done to advance freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law at home and around the world." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Other report

- **The B.C.** government's final report from its missing-women's inquiry charged that there was a disproportionate number of missing or murdered indigenous women and girls on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside from 1997-2002, and that their cases did not receive equal treatment by police.

Peaceful march

Macedonia's World War II veterans protest eviction by government

Second World War veterans in Macedonia have protested in the country's capital, after the government evicted their association from a downtown building, arguing the site could be put to better use.

Several hundred protesters, veterans in their 80s and 90s — some unable to walk without assistance — and supporters staged a peaceful march to the building in Skopje on Wednesday.

Use of the building was handed to a disabled group. The veterans lost a court battle to block that decision, but say they are appealing the ruling.

Government officials couldn't be immediately reached for comment.

During the Second World War, Macedonia was part of Yugoslavia and was occupied by Axis powers after a Nazi-led invasion in 1941. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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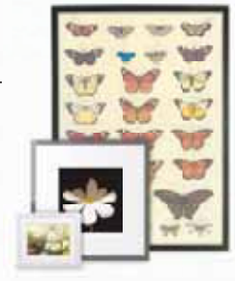

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Dominique Strauss-Kahn leaves his Paris apartment earlier this month. The former IMF chief lost his bid to have prostitution charges against him thrown out. JACQUES BRINON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Strauss-Kahn's legal problems not quite over

Lille, France. The only case remaining involves Strauss-Kahn's suspected role in a hotel prostitution ring

French judges decided Wednesday not to drop pimping charges against former International Monetary Fund chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn, according to his lawyers, who had sought to have the case thrown out.

The defence quickly vowed to appeal.

Strauss-Kahn, 63, is fresh off a legal settlement reached in the U.S. last week with Nafissatou Diallo, the New York hotel maid who had accused him of rape in May 2011.

That accusation torpedoed his once-illustrious political career, and was followed by other allegations of sex-related wrongdoing.

None has led to a conviction. The only case remaining is the investigation into Strauss-Kahn's suspected role in a hotel prostitution ring in the northern French city of Lille.

An appeals court in nearby Douai on Wednesday maintained preliminary charges filed against Strauss-Kahn in March for aggravated procurement in an organized gang — meaning the probe can continue.

He is one of several defendants in the case, which allegedly involves prominent city figures and police.

A French writer also claimed that Strauss-Kahn tried to rape her in 2003 but prosecutors threw out her case because it happened too long ago. The one-time presidential hopeful resigned from his IMF job and saw his international reputation collapse. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

No convictions so far

"We are certain that Dominique Strauss-Kahn will be cleared of all charges against him."

Frederique Baulieu, the former IMF chief's lawyer

Oshawa

Man accused of sexual assault at Gate 3:16 shelter

A man who worked and volunteered at an Oshawa shelter has been charged with sexual assault in several alleged incidents dating back up to 15 years. Police say a number of adult women recently came forward with the allegations. Earl Sanderson, 67, of Scugog Township, is charged with four counts of sexual assault. Anyone with information is asked to contact police.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

U.K. British minister falsely accused by cop?

Detectives are probing "very serious" allegations that a police officer fabricated claims against a British MP who was forced to quit a cabinet post after being accused of insulting police with the term "pleb," the prime minister said Wednesday.

Andrew Mitchell quit as the government's chief whip after he was accused of hurling the word at officers who stopped him from riding his bicycle through the Downing Street gates. Last week, a police officer from the diplomatic protection squad was arrested for alleged misconduct in public office. Channel 4 News has claimed the officer emailed his local lawmaker falsely pretending to be a member of the public who had witnessed the altercation. The email claimed Mitchell had called officers plebs. "A police officer posing as a member of the public and sending an email potentially to blacken the name of a cabinet minister is a very serious issue and does need to be seriously investigated," said Prime Minister David Cameron. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Obama wants ‘real progress, right now’

Tough tone. President invokes 2nd-amendment freedoms and recent spate of killings in proactive address

No excuses

“The fact that this problem is complex can no longer be an excuse for doing nothing.”

Barack Obama

U.S. President Barack Obama on Wednesday demanded “concrete proposals” on curbing gun violence that he could send to Congress no later than January — an urgent effort to build on the growing political consensus over gun restrictions following last week’s massacre of children at a Connecticut school.

It was a tough new tone for the president, whose first four years were largely quiet on the issue amid widespread political reluctance to tackle a powerful gun-rights lobby. But emotions have been high after the gunman in Friday’s shooting used a semi-automatic rifle to kill 20 young children and six adults at the school, after killing his mother at home.

“This time, the words need to lead to action,” Obama said. He said he will push legislation “without delay” and urged Congress to hold votes on the bill next year.

“The fact that we can’t prevent every act of violence doesn’t mean we can’t steadily reduce the violence,” Obama said.

The policy process Obama was announcing Wednesday was expected to include input from the departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services. The Department of Homeland Security is also expected to play a key role. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. President Barack Obama stands with Vice-President Joe Biden as he makes a statement Wednesday at the White House. Biden, a longtime gun-control advocate, will be spearheading efforts for a new gun policy. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Funeral processions continue in Newtown

Firefighters wait for a procession at the main intersection in the village of Newtown, Conn., on Wednesday, as they pay respects to Daniel Gerard Barden, one of the students killed during the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting. The small, quiet town has seen gridlock traffic caused by funeral processions, as well as the large number of national and international media covering the aftermath of the shooting. Barden, 7, was killed when the gunman, Adam Lanza, walked into the school last Friday and opened fire, killing 26 people, including 20 children, before killing himself.

JULIO CORTEZ/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Going too far? Bulletproof backpack maker’s sales up 300%

Parents reeling in the wake of the Connecticut school shooting are fuelling sales of armoured backpacks for children, as firearms enthusiasts stock up on assault rifles nationwide amid fears of imminent gun control measures.

U.S. armour manufacturer Amendment II’s sales of children backpacks and armoured inserts are up 300 per cent.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A children’s backpack with an anti-ballistic insert is shot with a 9-mm pistol. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Guns in Canada. Tories repeal gun-show rules

The Conservative government has repealed federal gun-show regulations, on the advice of the same controversial advisory committee the prime minister recently rebuked.

The changes kill a set of rules that were introduced by the Liberals in 1998, but never brought into force after years of deferrals.

The regulations would have required the sponsor of a gun show to notify police and the chief firearms officer of the province before an event, and to ensure the security and safety of the location and the guns.

The government says it consulted Public Safety Minister Vic Toews’ Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee, which felt the vast majority already follow the rules.

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Stephen Harper rejected the committee’s other recommendations to loosen certain gun control laws.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

This traffic officer really knows how to bust ... a move

Former Providence police officer Tony Lepore shows how low he can go while directing traffic. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Holiday tradition.
Former policeman has been dancing and directing traffic in Rhode Island since 1984

Ah, Christmas in Rhode Island. Exquisitely decorated mansions in Newport. A red nose on the giant termite that sits atop a Providence exterminator's building. And a traffic officer, doing disco and salsa moves in the middle of rush-hour traffic.

Officer Tony Lepore is as much a holiday tradition as anything else in the state that issued the first jail sentence for speeding 108 years ago. Since 1984, he has entertained drivers, pedestrians and gawkers with dance moves in downtown Providence — all while directing traffic.

"It feels good to see him out here, it definitely brings the holiday spirit," says emergency medical technician Michelle Peterson of Warwick, R.I. This year, she took her boys to see Lepore, 65, perform and got him to pose for pictures with them.

The routine, Lepore says, was born in the month of May out of boredom.

He was inspired by classic Candid Camera television footage he saw a day earlier that showed police officers elsewhere directing traffic with flair.

"I didn't know if my bosses were going to like it, so a lot of times if I saw a boss come down, I'd be doing my fancy stuff, then I'd go back and do it the old-fashioned way so I don't get caught," Lepore says.

His secret didn't last long. City residents began calling the police station and raving about Lepore's moves. A few days later, the Providence Journal, the state's largest newspaper, came out with a story on the sensation.

The positive publicity encouraged officials to endorse the dancing cop, who continued to perform until he left the job in 1988.

In 1992, Lepore says, he got a call from city officials asking him to rejoin the force to dance and direct traffic around Christmastime as they pushed to redefine the city's image and bring visitors downtown.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stopping traffic

"He's a landmark ... he's an icon, he's like a little mini-celebrity."
EMT and fan Michelle Peterson

Recovery

Four-star hotel on horizon for Haiti

Construction crews in Haiti are building what is expected to be the country's first four-star-branded hotel.

The $45-million US Marriott hotel is expected to create some 200 jobs and open in early 2015. It will feature 175 rooms and be located in Port-au-Prince.

The hotel is one of several planned for the capital and surrounding areas as Haiti tries to recover from a devastating 2010 earthquake that officials say killed 300,000 people. Investors say the hotel will attract foreign visitors.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Crime

Alleged robber caught red-nosed

There was nothing funny about a clown who stopped by a Crosstown Civic Credit Union in Winnipeg Tuesday afternoon.

The man — who police said Wednesday was dressed from head to toe like a clown, complete with a pair of fake breasts — also allegedly had a gun and robbed the credit union of an undisclosed amount of cash.

When police caught up with a suspect a short time later, he wasn't hard to pick out. "He had clothing that would be best described as a clown outfit," said a police spokesperson.

SHANE GIBSON/
METRO IN WINNIPEG

Environment

Endangered whale corpse found

One of the most endangered whales in the world has washed up dead on a beach in northeast Florida.

Marine officials said Wednesday that the eight-metre-long North Atlantic right whale washed up overnight on a beach near Palm Coast.

Federal marine official Barb Zoodsma says biologists aren't sure what caused the death.

A necropsy will be conducted on the beach since the one-year-old whale is too large to move. There are less than 400 left in the world.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canucks value Canadian cultural content: Survey

Made in Canada. Homegrown films warrant more attention, report finds

Canadians believe it's important to have access to homegrown cultural content but don't think our films are getting the attention they deserve, according to a new report.

The Department of Canadian Heritage commissioned a study to assess how much people valued and were able to access made-in-Canada books, films, magazines and music.

Respondents across the country — of all ages and sexes — agreed that Canadian content is essential, according to the June survey of 2,003 adults.

About 92 per cent of respondents said access to Canadian books and music was important, while about 90 per cent said the same for films and magazines.

About 80 per cent said they could easily find Canadian books and magazines of interest, and 69 per cent said they had no trouble finding Canadian music online.

But when it came to Canuck film, respondents felt there's more to be done.

The survey says

12

The percentage of those surveyed who said they download or stream movies online every day or at least once a week.

While 77 per cent said they were interested in watching Canadian films, large numbers suggested they weren't getting enough chances to do so.

About 73 per cent said more Canadian films should be aired on TV and 65 per cent said there should be more Canadian movies in theatres.

Only 51 per cent believed they could easily find Canadian films to watch and just 36 per cent thought they were well-promoted and advertised.

When asked if they were familiar with a number of recent Canadian films, about half recognized Resident Evil: Afterlife and Goon, nearly 40 per cent knew of Starbuck and Barney's Version, and only around 25 per cent were aware of Monsieur Lazhar and Incendies — which both earned best foreign language film Oscar nominations — and the star-studded A Dangerous Method.

The report was prepared by Quorus Consulting Group Inc. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Snowstorm wreaks havoc in Vancouver

Pedestrians are seen crossing Granville Street in downtown Vancouver on Wednesday. The storm, the second to hit Metro Vancouver in as many days, brought as much as 20 centimetres of snow to the higher elevations and slowed the morning commute. High winds forced BC Ferries to cancel all morning sailings between the mainland and Victoria and Nanaimo. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Witchcraft. Police allege Toronto-area man defrauded elderly couple

A 40-year-old Toronto-area man charged last month with pretending to practise witchcraft is now facing additional charges.

Toronto police say Gustavo Valencia Gomez of Mississauga was arrested again this week after other alleged victims came forward.

Police allege the new victims are an elderly Montreal couple defrauded of $13,000 on Nov. 28, and a Hamilton couple defrauded of $7,800 between June and October.

Investigators say a man used rituals to convince his victims that they were cursed and then offered to remove the curse for a sum of money.

Gomez faces charges that include pretending to practise witchcraft, fraud over $5,000, and possession of the proceeds of crime. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Vancouver. Drop-in centre ramps up services with influx of funding

After spending years helping to run a drop-in service for sex-trade workers in Vancouver on the thinnest of shoestrings, Kate Gibson, the executive director of Wish, has been told the centre will get an extra $750,000 per year from the provincial government.

Gibson says Wish will open for 18 hours a day, up from the six hours it is currently open. THE CANADIAN PRESS

A place of refuge

- The centre began helping just a few women a night in 1987, but that has grown to 150 to 200 women every night.
- Several of serial killer Robert Pickton's victims used Wish's services.

Quebec. Anti-corruption squad reveals long list of arrests, charges for 2012

Quebec's anti-corruption squad has produced a list of its activities from 2012 — and what a list it is.

Forty-nine people arrested. Criminal charges against 13 companies. One-hundred-and-seventy-seven different charges laid. And arrest warrants issued 450 times.

But Robert Lafreniere, head of the provincial unit, suggests his squad is just getting warmed up. "Acts of collusion and corruption exist everywhere in Quebec — in every region. Our investigations are proving this to us," he told a news conference Wednesday.

The arrests so far have dealt essentially with alleged wrongdoing in the construction industry — with charges laid against the mayors of two small towns and the mayor of Laval resigning. THE CANADIAN PRESS

First Nations protesters rally for treaty rights

Growing. March in London, Ont., one of many as campaign builds steam

ANGELA MULLINS
Metro in London, Ont.

Beating drums, hurling insults at the Harper government, and gridlocking traffic, about a thousand First Nations people descended on London, Ont., Wednesday as part of a nationwide protest centred on treaty rights.

The activists paraded along a highway and road and through downtown — the path their ancestors took to the Thames River — as police turned to Twitter urging patience from drivers.

Many wore red armbands and headbands during the four-hour, approximately 18-kilometre march, a sign of sovereignty, the protesters said. People chanted "Idle no more" — the phrase that's become the grassroots campaign's motto — as they neared the forks of the river for a rally.

"We've waited for things to happen. We haven't made them happen," Chippewa of the Thames First Nations Chief Joe Miskokomon said. "It's time for the government to stand up and listen to us."

Backers of the Idle No More movement say federal policies — specifically those in the omnibus budget legislation, Bill C-45 — are weakening environmental laws and hurting aboriginal communities. First Nations should be recognized as sovereign stakeholders in decisions affecting land and resources, they claim.

"We are the government in this country, and (Prime Minister Stephen) Harper has to start recognizing that," Glen Hare, the Anishinabek Nation's deputy grand chief, said Wednesday. "Harper has crossed the line.

"Don't give Canada away and don't sell us."

Idle No More started in Saskatchewan, spreading across Canada and into the U.S.

The first protests were launched Dec. 10 and this week's efforts are expected to culminate with a Friday rally on Parliament Hill.

Movement's stance

- **Manifesto.** The Idle No More manifesto says Canada has become "one of the wealthiest countries in the world" on the backs of First Nations people.

Aboriginal drummers play in an intersection during a protest in London, Ont., on Wednesday. The indigenous peoples' rights march blocked a highway before heading into London, ending with a rally in the downtown.
DAVE CHIDLEY/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sentencing. Trial judge with vertigo questions his own fairness

The B.C. Court of Appeal has reduced a man's sentence to 18 months from two years after the trial judge said he was suffering from a sudden vertigo problem and questioned his own fairness.

Peter Hancock pleaded guilty to one count of possessing heroin for the purpose of trafficking, and his lawyer suggested a sentence of one year.

The Crown wanted two years and the judge asked Hancock if he preferred to serve 18 months in a provincial jail or two years in the federal system.

"I guess federal," Hancock replied.

The next day, the judge had Hancock brought back to court and said he might have been unwell when he imposed the sentence and couldn't say if he acted impartially.

"He stated that shortly after the sentencing he became unwell with a sudden onset vertigo problem," the appeal-court decision said.

Hancock wanted the judge to change the sentence to provincial time but the judge said it was too late for him to do that and suggested an appeal.

The unusual circumstances had the Crown conceding that it would be appropriate for the appeal-court judges to substitute a sentence that the trial judge likely would have imposed had he been well.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"He was concerned that he could not say when the symptoms came upon him and he might have been unwell when he imposed the sentence on the appellant the previous day."

Appeal-court decision, referring to the judge's condition

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How will you spend your last night on Earth?

"I wouldn't do anything differently. I just don't see the point. I'm not a crazy guy to begin with."

Evaan Kheraj, Vancouver

"I would probably spend it with my family and friends. I don't really know what else to say."

Diane Leng, Calgary

"I can't say what I'd really do because it's not appropriate to print in a newspaper."

Luke Kellener, Fernie, B.C./Perth, Ont.

"I'm a space fan, so I would like to ... look up at the outer world with (my son) one last time."

Barry Obondo, Edmonton

"I would get a plane to Australia .... though I probably wouldn't get there in 24 hours."

Elaine Fitzpatrick, Saskatoon

"I would live it up with all my friends and family and I wouldn't even think about tomorrow."

Jaci Youngson, Regina

Doom awaits us — later

2012 prophecy. The world won't end on Dec. 21, experts say, but there are plenty of ways Earth could go

KIERON MONKS
Metro World News in London

It was fun while it lasted, but it seems the world is ending. A growing clamour, based on the Mayan calendar, insists that Dec. 21, 2012, will mark the death of humanity. Even NASA has received thousands of terrified messages from the public.

But the calendar has been misinterpreted, say experts, who claim the "end" refers only to the end of a cycle. The Mayan calendar is split into 394-year "baktuns," and 2012 will see a new era.

"The 13th Baktun will end on Dec. 21, and another will start," says Ines Valera-Silva, a researcher in Mayan studies at Loughborough University in the U.K. "That's all. A catastrophe has never been predicted."

Mayans today have stopped using the old calendar, Valera-Silva adds. "There is no reason to interpret this as a prophecy, but obviously some people are excited by it."

Who'll look the fool if Earth does end? Worshippers gather at Kukulkan temple at Chichén Itzá, Mexico. CUARTOSCURO

Hollywood movies and social media have driven the debate on exactly how the world will end. One Facebook page with 13,000 fans suggests it will come from a cosmic event.

"The biggest threat is a comet impact," says Benny Peiser, catastrophe specialist and founder of climate policy network CCNet. "It happens every few million years and could happen at any time. Astronomers are scanning the sky for potential risks, and we need to solve the problem for good by developing the technology to deflect asteroids."

More speculators believe a black hole will open and swallow us all. The fear led to widespread criticism of scientists working on the Large Hadron Collider, rumoured to be capable of producing a black hole.

Humankind may not need cosmic forces to bring down Armageddon. The Cold War may be over, but the number of nuclear nations has grown swiftly — and with it, the risk of a "final war."

"It's no secret how to make the weapons and it's not hard to think of people crazy enough to use them," says Alan Robock, environmental scientist at Rutgers University and author of Nuclear Winter Revisited.

Threat of terrorism aside, Robock sees a risk in regional feuds between nuclear powers India and Pakistan or Israel and Iran.

Environmentalists point to rising sea levels and the threat of a supervolcano, while nanotechnology may yet produce microorganisms that kill us from the inside.

The endless possibilities explain the interest in bookmaker William Hill's offer of 1,000,000-to-1 on the world ending.

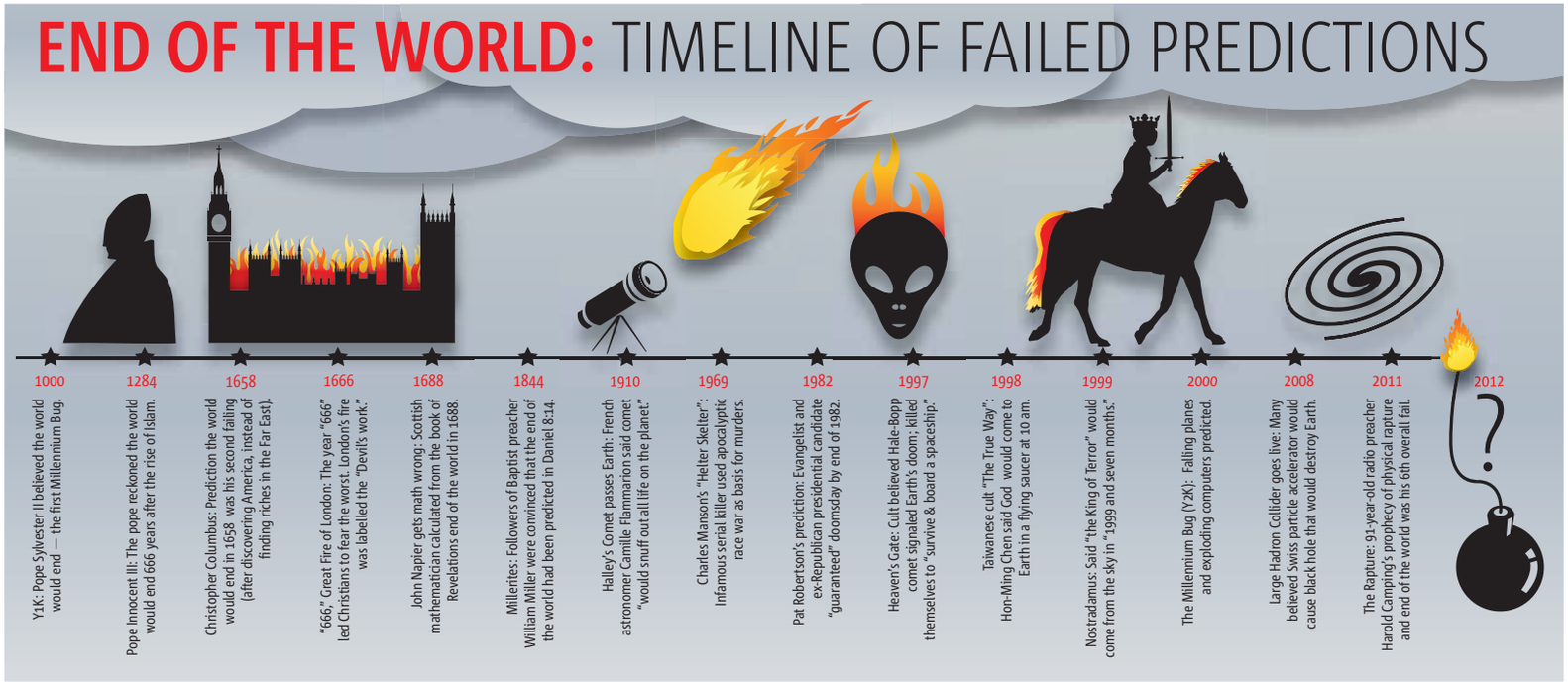
"Some may say it is a bet we can never lose, for the obvious reason that we won't be here to pay out should it happen," spokesman Graham Sharpe says, but several bets have already been placed.

Apocalypse options

- **Comet strike.** Still the most immediate threat; likely to be sudden. **Fear factor: 7/10**
- **Nuclear war.** An ever-present threat and probably more likely than world peace. **FF: 6/10**
- **Global warming.** The rising sea is already threatening some islands. **FF: 4/10**
- **Disease pandemic.** Could happen but unlikely to catch us by surprise. **FF: 2/10**
- **Sun burnout.** A sure thing but will be in 4.5 billion years' time. **FF: 0/10**

Bedtime reading: This Mayan manuscript suggests an end to a calendar cycle. GETTY IMAGES

END OF THE WORLD: TIMELINE OF FAILED PREDICTIONS


1000
Y1K: Pope Sylvester II believed the world would end — the first Millennium Bug.
1284
Pope Innocent III: The pope reckoned the world would end 666 years after the rise of Islam.
1658
Christopher Columbus: Prediction the world would end in 1658 was his second failing (after discovering America, instead of finding riches in the Far East).
1666
"666," Great Fire of London: The year "666" led Christians to fear the worst. London's fire was labelled the "Devil's work."
1688
John Napier gets math wrong: Scottish mathematician calculated from the book of Revelations end of the world in 1688.
1844
Millerites: Followers of Baptist preacher William Miller were convinced that the end of the world had been predicted in Daniel 8:14.
1910
Halley's Comet passes Earth: French astronomer Camille Flammarion said comet "would snuff out all life on the planet."
1969
Charles Manson's "Helter Skelter": Infamous serial killer used apocalyptic race war as basis for murders.
1982
Pat Robertson's prediction: Evangelist and ex-Republican presidential candidate "guaranteed" doomsday by end of 1982.
1997
Heaven's Gate: Cult believed Hale-Bopp comet signaled Earth's doom; killed themselves to "survive & board a spaceship."
1998
Taiwanese cult "The True Way": Hon-Ming Chen said God would come to Earth in a flying saucer at 10 am.
1999
Nostradamus: Said "the King of Terror" would come from the sky in "1999 and seven months."
2000
The Millennium Bug (Y2K): Falling planes and exploding computers predicted.
2008
Large Hadron Collider goes live: Many believed Swiss particle accelerator would cause black hole that would destroy Earth.
2011
The Rapture: 91-year-old radio preacher Harold Camping's prophecy of physical rapture and end of the world was his 6th overall fail.
2012
?

"Disney World.... Where else would you rather be but the happiest place on Earth?"

Chris Hancock, Winnipeg

"I already live every day like it's the last. So, (I'd) just carry on. I don't make future plans."

Andrew Goddard, London, Ont.

"Blissfully ignorant that it is the last day on Earth. I just would not want to be aware."

Candice McCavitt, Toronto

"I would make a list of everyone in my life that I had something important to say to."

Kirk Raybould, Toronto

"I would break all the laws, all the rules. No drugs, no alcohol: It's not something you need at the end."

Fred Labonte, Ottawa

"I'd probably buy unlimited sushi ... drink a lot and not worry about the hangover the next day."

Leanne Stevens, Halifax

ERIKA PADRÓN
Metro World News in Mexico

DECEMBER 21 MAKES MAYANS LAUGH

Native Mayan José Natividad Ic Xec tells Metro the calendar's end has nothing to do with the world's end

José Natividad Ic Xec, a native Mayan living in Mérida, capital of Yucatán in Mexico, where the Mayan civilization once thrived, has dedicated his life to promoting his culture and tradition. Xec explains what the doomsday prophecy really means for his compatriots.

What does Dec. 21 mean to the Mayan people?
For Mayans living in Yucatán, this date means nothing. Like anyone else, we spend that day thinking about what we are going to eat, about our jobs or what the next few months will be like for us. This date was only conceived as a stage in a calendar, as Dec. 22 marks the end of 13 baktuns, (a baktun is a period of 394 years or 144,000 days). And so it's just the end of an era in a calendar.

So the end-of-the-world prophecy is all fantasy?
People speak of a revolution in human consciousness, a new light that will shine upon the world. Believers talk of some kind of transformation and will gather at the Mayan pyramids to perform some kind of ritual. But all of this is not attributed to the Maya; we really don't care about it — on the contrary, it makes us laugh. Our people know little about the ancient Mayan Long Count calendar. The only thing we know is that the date Dec. 22 marks an end in the calendar, but people are using the date Dec. 21 because it is the solstice and thus a more memorable date.

Then why is the date such a big deal?
Experts claim that the 13th baktun is a good opportunity for people to make a profit out of those who believe. And if those faithful genuinely believe in it, they would be frightened; they would look for a bunker or think about a plan of survival. So this end-of-the-world talk is only a bit of fun.

You use social networks to promote your culture. How popular is Chilam Balam (Xec's blog based on the Mayan document allegedly containing prophecies)?
It's a concept that I started two years ago, first on Twitter and Facebook, then on a blog, which I hope will continue to grow. On my website, I publish stories on Mayan culture and its characteristics.

Do you yourself have any plans to mark the Mayan event?
Yes, on Dec. 21 and 22, I will be doing live broadcasts from (ancient Mayan site) Chichén Itzá. I will be chatting to Mayans who live in the area. I want them to tell me about how they live. Perhaps they will perform some traditional dancing. I will also talk to other experts like myself who have worked their whole lives to promote Mayan culture. But for all this to happen, I need sponsors. But I'm aware that our old indigenous culture is not a big seller.

José Natividad Ic Xec

- **Age:** 49
- **Born:** Peto, a Mayan village in Yucatán.
- **Background:** Parents were Mayan speakers; grew up speaking Mayan and later learned Spanish; at the end of secondary school moved to Mérida, where he currently resides; worked at the Diario de Yucatán newspaper for 17 years; also studied at the Seminario Conciliar de Yucatán.

Doomsday industry still booming despite the lessons of the past

Are you done your apocalypse shopping yet? You could throw down $30,000 on a space in a luxury underground bunker or a cheaper "survival kit" that can help you eat grass. Apocalypse literature is booming, with sales from the Left Behind book series worth almost $1 billion.

It's a modern update of the paper "pardons" sold as insurance against judgment day in the Middle Ages. Many experts trace the birth of the apocalypse industry to the U.S. Millerite movement, when preacher William Miller launched a campaign to promote his vision of doomsday in the 1840s.

"Systematic commercialization first arose from fear of nuclear war in the 1960s, with companies building bomb shelters," says Lorne Dawson, sociologist and author of Prophetic Failure and Millennial Movements. "That showed the business opportunity, and it continued with the survivalist movement of the 1970s and the growing fear of an eco-catastrophe."

Doomsday plan: Dress up like a Mayan and party hard. CONTRIBUTED

The years 2000 and 2012 have revived the focus, and Dawson believes it taps into a basic human desire. "Simple psychology shows that people need to believe they do not live in chaos, that there is a higher purpose."

Doom preaching has drawn backlash following cases such as the 2011 suicide of British teenager Isabel Taylor. "It's an industry that exploits anxiety and can be dangerous," says Bill Hudson, astronomer and editor of the 2012hoax blog.

Even if 2012 passes without incident, don't expect the industry to stop. "Even when a theory is debunked, a core group tends to become even more fervent," says Hudson. "True believers are locked in. You can't reason someone out of a position they didn't reason themselves into."

KIERON MONKS/MWN IN LONDON, U.K.

Mexico. Prophecy injects billions into economy

It may be the end of the world, but certainly not for Mexico's economy. The Mayan prophecy will have attracted more than $15 billion in tourist revenue by the end of 2012 as millions flock to the country to discover its indigenous civilization.

Mexico's Ministry of Tourism predicts 52 million visitors will have come to Mexico by the end of 2012, many of whom will have visited the Mundo Maya (Quintana Roo, Yucatan and Campeche states).

"Today we are the 10th power for tourism in the world and we are working hard to be in the top five," outgoing President Felipe Calderon said.

Mexico put aside $10 million for a 2012 project last summer.

AGUSTÍN VELASCO/MWN IN MEXICO

Party like a Mayan

More than 500 Mayan-themed events will have taken place by the end of the year.

- **Festival Mundo Maya.** Folk festival that celebrates Mayan traditions in the Mexican city of Campeche until Dec. 30.
- **The Gran Museo del Mundo Maya.** Located in Merida, Yucatan's capital, the museum holds precious Mayan artifacts.
- **The End of the Long Count Mayan Calendar.** The 365-step pyramid of Chichén Itzá will host a ceremonial event on Dec. 21.

Penny's end to cost a mint

Chump change. New analysis shows price tag for redeeming one-cent coins in circulation will be about $7.3M yearly

The demise of Canada's one-cent coin next year will save taxpayers less than expected.

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty announced the impending withdrawal of the penny in last March's budget, saying the government would save $11 million a year in production costs.

That's because production of each one-cent coin had cost the Royal Canadian Mint about 1.6 cents. But a new analysis shows that redeeming the mountain of circulating pennies beginning Feb. 4 will cost taxpayers about $7.3 million a year.

The analysis projects a net cost of about $38.3 million to redeem some six billion pennies expected to be turned in by consumers and financial institutions over the next six years.

Costs include $53 million expected to be paid out to redeem the face value of the coins, as well as another $27 million in handling and administration costs by the Royal Canadian Mint.

Recycling the zinc and copper from melted-down pennies will bring in about $42.5 million in revenue, leaving government in the red at slightly more than $38 million.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

By the numbers

35B

Over the last century, the Royal Canadian Mint has stamped an estimated 35 billion pennies from metal plates. The penny remains legal tender even after Feb. 4.

Jeff Golby wears an oversized model of a penny on his head as he collects donations of one-cent coins for charity during this past summer's Canada Day festivities in Vancouver. The federal government is phasing out use of the penny, and the last one was minted this past May. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Philanthropy. Zuckerberg donates $500M in stock

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said he is giving nearly $500 million US in stock to a Silicon Valley charity with the aim of funding health and education issues.

Zuckerberg donated 18 million Facebook shares, valued at $498.8 million based on their Tuesday closing price. The beneficiary is the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, a non-profit that works with donors to allocate their gifts.

This is Zuckerberg's largest donation to date. He pledged $100 million in Facebook stock to Newark, N.J., public schools in 2010, before his company went public earlier this year.

With the latest contribution, he added, "we will look for areas in education and health to focus on next." He did not give further details on what plans there may be for funds.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Giving Pledge

- In 2010, Zuckerberg joined Giving Pledge, an effort led by Microsoft Corp. founder Bill Gates and Berkshire Hathaway Inc. CEO Warren Buffett to get the richest people in the U.S. to donate most of their wealth. His wife, Priscilla Chan, joined with him.

Safety concerns

Hyundai recalls Velosters over brakes, sunroofs

Hyundai is recalling thousands of late-model Velosters in the U.S. and Canada to fix problems involving parking brakes on some models and a sunroof that can shatter and cause injuries on others.

The recall involving the sunroof affects cars from the 2012 model year, including 1,593 in Canada. The separate recall to fix parking brakes affects about 1,565 vehicles in Canada.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Market Minute

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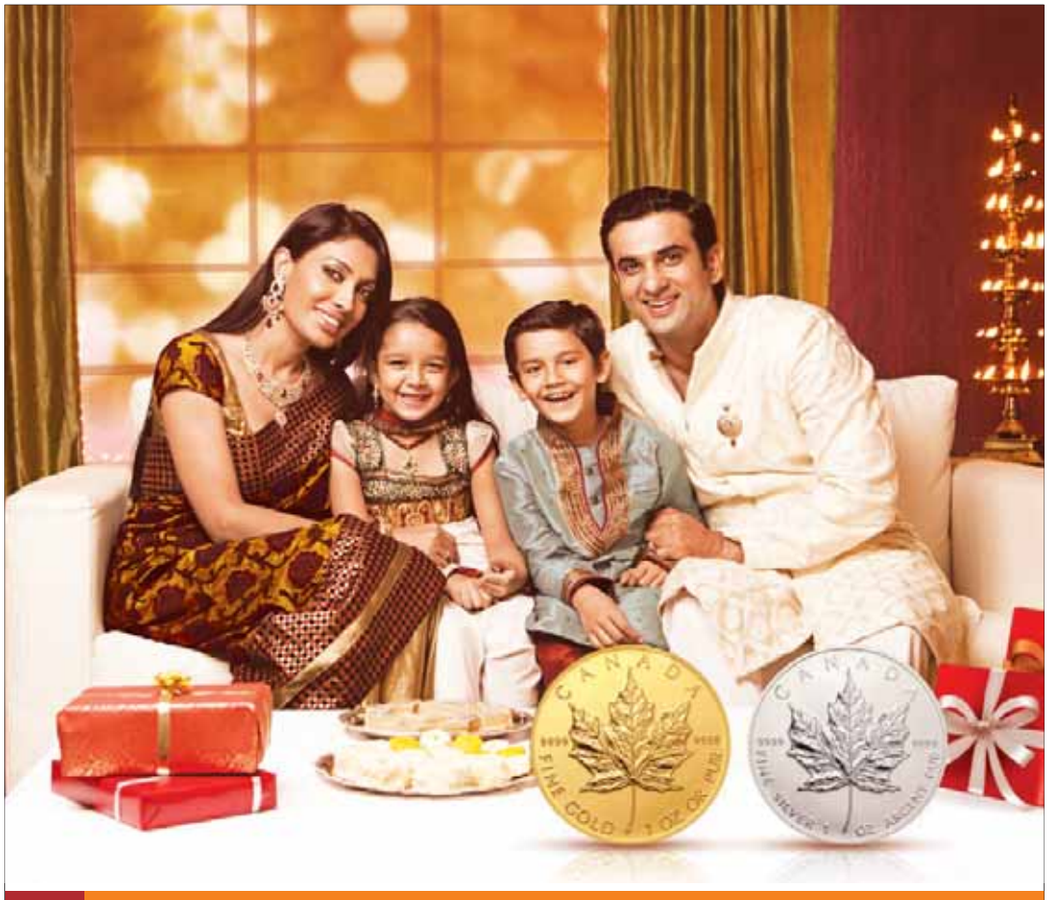
Dow Jones: 13,251.97 (-98.99)



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VEGAS: WHAT HAPPENS HERE IS WRITTEN IN A COLUMN

HE SAYS...
John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

Greetings, world travellers! The U.S. may have a Bible Belt to hold up the britches of the nation, but this week we look at Las Vegas, the city where pants are optional.

This luminous postage stamp in the middle of desert darkness is home to the American stereotype in all its glory. I have enough American friends to know the obvious — that the U.S. is incredibly diverse — but here in Vegas I'm surrounded by large boobs (not literally), large food (I had a crab cake with the same size and heft of a curling stone) and large cars (my "compact" rental could comfortably seat a starting hockey lineup wearing its gear).

After four days here, I have compiled this exhaustive, 350-word guide to Sin City, which contains oodles of useful information for your trip to Las Vegas. (LEGAL DISCLAIMER: This column contains no useful information about anything.)

Las Vegas 101

Las Vegas, literally "Lots of Neon," was founded by itinerant escorts and slot-machine builders in the 1930s, who dreamed of a new America where all the worst jobs in the country could be concentrated in one place. Here you'll find tens of thousands of service workers who must put up with customers in a perpetual "Listen here, friend" state of 1-a.m. drunkenness, and the servers do it all with a smile — a tight, painful smile. You will pity tip more than you ever have in your entire life.

Fortunately, you'll have plenty of opportunities to distract yourself. For instance, while newspaper boxes lie empty in much of the United States, Vegas does a booming media trade with such well-respected publications as Barely Legal, College Girls! and Alt. Who Says Print is Dead?

And did you know that in Las Vegas it's legal to gamble? The only rule is that the gambling must take place in a one-third replica of some other place on Earth.

The casino resorts include:

- The Venetian, which has an exact replica of the Venice canals, right down to the neon-rimmed gondolas, the ice-skating rink and the country-western band playing covers on the hour. Viva Italia!
- New York, New York, which for just $5 extra will give you a one-third mugging.
- The Bellagio, famous for its fountains, which are a replica of the Eastern European country Bellagistan and its three-times-bigger fountains.
- One shopping mall also looks like a (really) cheap one-third knock-off of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, so presumably there'll soon be a really earnest but widely disliked resort here soon with the slogan "A World-Class Casino ... Aren't We?"

Vegas could be tempting to dismiss as low-rent or vulgar, but unlike many other cities, it knows exactly what it is. And if you don't like it, well, nobody told you to travel to the middle of the desert.

The city also has many bars and whatnot, but I don't want to get into that because of space restrictions and just in case I ever want to run for U.S. Congress. Mistakes were made. We'll leave it at that.

Because, as the man said, you got to know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, and know when to run. (That man, of course, was a one-third replica of Kenny Rogers.)

A sign of the times in Las Vegas. JOHN MAZEROLLE/FOR METRO

Takes an eagle eye to spot a hoax

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Class project

World fooled by Montreal video

Relax, world — your baby won't get snatched by an eagle if you visit Montreal.

An online video of the massive bird plucking an infant off the ground has been acknowledged by its creators as a fake.

The admission comes after the video, produced by students at a new-media training school in Montreal, was viewed millions of times Wednesday on YouTube and was the subject of news reports in Canada and internationally. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Other pranks

With the Internet in shock over the eagle/toddler hoax, Metro decided to revisit some other online video spoofs of the past.

- **Lonelygirl15.** This was an early online video blog depicting the life of a fictional teenager named Bree Avery. The series followed the typical angst-ridden teenager whose confessional videos covered things like her favourite stuffed animals or her first kiss. Over time, the show evolved to include a cult and the mysterious disappearance of Bree's parents. In the fall of 2006, fans of the show discovered that Bree was actually a 19-year-old actress named Jessica Rose, and the show was revealed to be fake.
- **Dating site eHarmony cat lady.** A woman named Debbie tearfully confessed her love of felines in what appeared to be a dating site biography. The site released a statement after admitting it was a hoax.
- **Onion iPod charger.** A video purportedly showed a man charging his iPod using an onion and some Gatorade. It also garnered a lot of press when frustrated Apple enthusiasts plugged their devices into various vegetables.
- **Microsoft 'viral marketing' slip and slide.** A video shows a man rocketing down a giant water slide before flying off a ramp at the end and landing in a small wading pool. The video was created using a stuntman and computer animation, and was eventually revealed to be part of a marketing campaign for Microsoft Office.

Watch these videos and more at metronews.ca.

Metropolitan Panel

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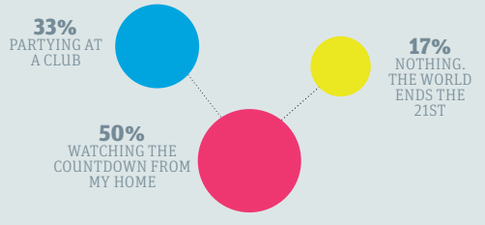
What will you be doing for New Year's?



Twitter

@_ttherese: Currently grocery shopping. Since 7am. God love 24hr holiday hours. Now I wish it was like this all the time. #YYC

@Jenndalen: That awkward moment when the 21st is literally "The Day After Tomorrow" #Mayans #yyc

@emarchak: Everyone in #yyc says "Merry Christmas" instead of "Happy Holidays," and it's totally throwing me for a loop.

@sydneynfld: -23 getting in my car this morning.... I'm ready for #summer again now please. #toocold #canadianproblems #yyc #brr

@bbtetrault: I def just saw a guy driving with a tampon up his nose.. #yyc

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The freedom of restrictions

Jocelyn Alice, left, and Lisa Jacobs keep their music simple, but soulful. The duo plays Wine-Ohs on Thursday. HANDOUT

Jocelyn & Lisa.
Singer-bassist duo debut EP tonight

BACKSTAGE PASS
Lisa Wilton
calgary@metronews.ca

Writing songs for only vocals and bass guitar has been one of the most exciting challenges of Jocelyn Alice's career.

"There's so much more freedom," says Alice, one-half of soulful Calgary duo, Jocelyn & Lisa.

"And there are so many more restrictions. Every note has to hit perfectly and every single part of the song has to hit, or it's painfully obvious."

Alice approached bassist Lisa Jacobs almost two years ago — after watching her perform with several local funk and soul groups, including Kyemara and the Kirby Sewell Band — and suggested they write a song together.

Jacobs admits she was initially unsure about collaborating on the project, as she's always worked in larger bands as a freelancer.

But she says she's thrilled with how well it's worked out.

"We really challenge and stretch each other as musicians," says Jacobs.

"Normally, we get together and one of us will have an idea, like a melodic idea and then we'll feed off each other and build the song together.

"It's really unique to our experiences."

Both Alice and Jacobs have made a name for themselves in soul, blues and funk music circles in town — Alice with her strong, sultry and sweet vocals and Jacobs as an in-demand session bassist.

But fans of the two had mixed reactions when it came to them performing as a duo.

"It's something totally not typical," says Jacobs.

"So some people got it and for other people it took a couple of listens. Most people really understood the vibe of us and the presence or chemistry. But there were a couple of people who wrote on Jocelyn's Facebook wall, 'You're really great, but you should probably fire your bassist.'"

"Or hire a drummer," adds Alice with a laugh.

The pair recently released its debut EP, Weary Warrior, and has been gigging regularly, including a show tonight at Wine-Ohs (located in the old BeatNiq space.)

"There's a discomfort about the amount of silences as a listener," says Alice of the duo's music.

"It's kind of what we're all about. We want to make people feel comfortable in how open we are, but we also want to question so much musically."

Details

- Jocelyn Alice was runner-up in the nationally televised singing talent show, Popstars, in 2002.
- Lisa Jacobs still performs with the same bass guitar her father taught her to play when she was a kid.
- Alice & Jacob's debut three-song EP, Weary Warrior, will be available at the duo's shows at Wine-Ohs tonight at the Ship & Anchor Pub on Jan. 2.

Internet backlash. The fantastic Mr. Jamie Foxx responds to his critics

Django Unchained has received criticism for its violent scenes. HANDOUT

The Internet is stupid, according to Jamie Foxx. When asked about criticism regarding his new film, Django Unchained, the star is adamant about the fact the online naysayers — who have been critical of the film's frequent use of the N word by both black and white characters — are irrelevant. As long as Oprah approves, everything's basically OK.

"When Oprah saw it, we were like ..." Foxx gives us a terrified stare. "She was like, 'I loved it. It was hard to watch in some spots. I cannot believe I was laughing in some spots at some of these things because you know me, I'm super-black woman.' I'm paraphrasing."

Even director of the film, Quentin Tarantino, found himself susceptible to the online criticism about the film, according to Foxx.

"A couple friends of mine, entertainers, read so much of it until they shut down," Foxx says. "Even Quentin calls me, says, 'Man.' I'm like, 'What? Who gives a f—k. They're on the Internet.' The Internet to me is nothing."

Foxx has an explanation for all the ire, for his movie and on the Internet in general.

"What it comes down to is what I call subliminal jealousy," he says. "A lot of people aren't artists. A lot of people aren't special, so all they can do is stand on the outside and just say the loudest, craziest, zaniest sh— in the world. I actually laugh at most of the stuff, but that's all it is."

But the film about a freed slave who becomes a bounty hunter is receiving an equal amount of praise for its unflinchingly violent portrayal of life in the South, just two years before the Civil War. While the brutality is graphic, in a marked contrast, there are plenty of hilarious moments. It's the kind of juxtaposition that is the hallmark of a Tarantino film.

"(Kerry Washington's and my) character were more the grounded characters and then all of these funny things that happen around them, which I think is so necessary, because it gave people some relief," Foxx says.

HEIDI PATALANO/METRO WORLD NEWS

Quoted

"What it comes down to is what I call subliminal jealousy."

Jamie Foxx
Django Unchained star

Tarantino Unchained on Django emotions

New movie. Director talks about how he scaled back parts of his new movie despite wanting to take it further than he ended up doing

LIZ BROWN
scene@metronews.ca

Django Unchained is a movie so brutal, it brought Quentin Tarantino to tears.

In Toronto earlier this month for the Canadian premiere, he recounted how he broke down during an intense scene where a couple of sadistic slave owners whip Broomhilda (played by Kerry Washington), the wife of the film's hero Django.

"I was operating the camera on one of those scenes and (Washington) got to me. The next thing you know I was completely blind because my eyepiece was filling up with tears," he says.

But it was more the context of the brutality than the bloody assault that yanked at Tarantino's emotions.

"That was a rough scene," he admits. "Where we were doing it, when you see that scene, you will see shacks behind her and those were the actual slave quarters where the slaves lived on those plantations. There is blood in that grass and flesh in those trees and we felt the ancestors who once walked there," he says.

The Django Unchained that audiences will view when it heads to theatres on Dec. 25 is a toned-down version of the film Tarantino originally offered the American ratings juggernaut MPAA.

"They actually gave an R rating to a rougher version than I ultimately ended up presenting to the public," he says.

It was the director himself who made the call to chill on the violence — even though the gore remains trademark Tarantino and there are plenty of scenes that will churn the stomachs of the strongest viewers.

Rated R

"I could handle a rougher version of the movie than what exists right now. I have more of a tolerance for it."

Quentin Tarantino

"I could handle a rougher version of the movie than what exists right now. I have more of a tolerance for it, but I kind of realized that when I watched that version of the movie with audiences, that I was traumatizing them too much. It's just that f—king simple. And I want people to enjoy the movie at the very end of it."

Clocking in at just under three hours, there's plenty to enjoy in Tarantino's take on the spaghetti western and his homage to Italian director Sergio Corbucci, the man behind the original Django. The film follows Django (Jamie Foxx), a slave-turned-bounty hunter on his quest to free his wife from the evil plantation owner Calvin Candie (Leonardo DiCaprio).

Set in the pre-Civil War South, Tarantino peppers his dialogue with the N word, substitutes literary references for his typical pop culture banter and offers his heroes lots of moral grey areas in which to roam.

"I wasn't so much trying to get a message across (about slavery) as paint a very realistic picture of what America was like at that time and create a world where slavery is the norm," he says.

"Rather than make some soapbox speeches about it, or make points against America, I just wanted to ... take you back to that time and stick you in the middle of it."

Director Quentin Tarantino made a conscious effort to drop some violence from his recent film. HANDOUT

Adele voted as AP Entertainer of the Year

Banner year. Singer finishes out 2012 with another award, beating out PSY, Twilight cast, Taylor Swift and author E.L. James

The 24-year-old singer Adele continues to collect year-end awards. JONATHAN SHORT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Though Adele didn't have a new album or a worldwide tour in 2012, she's still rolling. After a year of Grammy glory and James Bond soundtracking, Adele has been voted The Associated Press Entertainer of the Year.

In 132 ballots submitted by members and subscribers of the AP, Adele easily outpaced other vote-getters like Taylor Swift, Fifty Shades of Grey author E.L. James, the South Korean viral video star PSY and the cast of Twilight.

Editors and broadcasters were asked to cast their ballot for the person who had the most influence on entertainment and culture in 2012.

Adele's year began in triumph at the Grammys, took a turn through recording the theme to the 007 film Skyfall and ended with the birth of her son in October. The ubiquitous Adele was that rare thing in pop culture — an unqualified sensation, a megastar in a universe of niche hits.

By the end of the year, her sophomore album, 21, had passed 10 million copies sold in the U.S., only the 21st album in the Nielsen SoundScan era (begun in 1991) to achieve diamond status. Buoyed by hits like Someone Like You and Rolling in the Deep long after its release in early 2011, 21 was also the top-selling album on iTunes for the second year running.

As David Panian, news editor for Michigan's Daily Telegram, put it: "It just seemed like you couldn't turn on the radio without hearing one of her songs."

Women have had a lock on the annual Entertainer of the Year selection. Previous winners include Lady Gaga, Taylor Swift, Betty White and Tina Fey. Stephen Colbert is the lone male winner in the six-year history of voting.

The Grammy Awards in February were essentially the de facto crowning of the 24-year-old Adele, whose real name is Adele Adkins, as a pop queen. She won six awards, including album of the year. It was also a comeback of sorts for Adele, who performed for the first time since having vocal cord surgery, drawing a standing ovation from the Staples Center crowd.

Quoted

"There was an overwhelming embrace of Adele and her music. And that was never more evident to me than when I heard teenagers express their enthusiastic expectations for the new James Bond movie because Adele performed the theme song."

Joe Butkiewicz

Accepting the album of the year award, a teary Adele exclaimed: "Mum, girl did good!" The emotional, sniffling singer endeared many viewers to her when she copped in her acceptance speech to having "a bit of snot."

"This record is inspired by something that is really normal and everyone's been through it, just a rubbish relationship," said Adele.

But her luck in love has since turned, thanks to her boyfriend Simon Konecki. In an interview with Vogue magazine, Adele said she was through with breakup records and done being "a bitter witch."

When Adele announced in June that she was having a baby with Konecki, her website promptly crashed under the heavy traffic. Their son was born in October.

With such an avalanche of success and now a mother of a newborn son, Adele has understandably taken a step out of the spotlight.

One notable exception was recording the opening credits theme song to Skyfall. The song was recorded with her 21 producer Paul Epworth at the Abbey Road Studios in London with a 77-piece orchestra. Within hours, it zoomed to the top of digital charts.

"There was an overwhelming embrace of Adele and her music," said Joe Butkiewicz, executive editor of the Times Leader in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. "And that was never more evident to me than when I heard teenagers express their enthusiastic expectations for the new James Bond movie because Adele performed the theme song."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jingle, jingle! Add some rhythm to your holiday shopping

PAT HEALY
Metro in Boston

5 books for music lovers

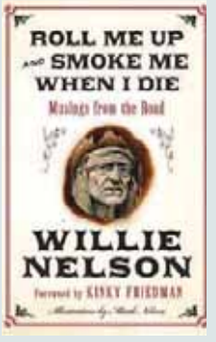
How Music Works

David Byrne

Talking Heads frontman David Byrne spends the bulk of his writing exploring, not explaining, music. To juggle his personal and professional commitments, the tone leaps between memoir, history lesson, advice column and philosophical exegesis. This format makes for a lively argument, complete with arty flourishes (the page numbers, you'll notice, are backward).

Roll Me Up and Smoke Me When I Die: Musings from the Road

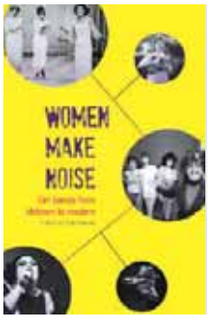
By Willie Nelson



If one day someone really rolls up Willie Nelson's corpse and smokes it, it will probably taste like whiskey, denim and an old, battered guitar. This memoir is as rambling as you'd expect, with details of the highwayman's life blown out in disorienting fragments stitched together in no discernible order. Scattered but vivid, it is an earnest account of a cloudy life on the road.

Women Make Noise: Girl Bands from Motown to Modern

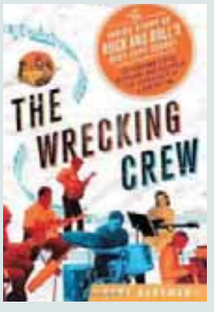
Edited by Julia Downes



This collection of essays by journalists, fans, musicians and industry people celebrates the under-recognized history of all-girl rock bands. Beginning with groups like the Supremes and the Ronettes, the scope extends to the present day, covering punk rockers such as the Slits and the experimental pop music of Björk.

The Wrecking Crew: The Inside Story of Rock and Roll's Best-Kept Secret

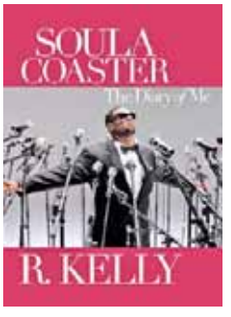
By Kent Hartman



Studio musicians are a humble lot. While stars steal the glory, these poor souls rarely get more than a nod in the liner notes. This book documents the group of Los Angeles session musicians who, in the 1960s, created some of the decade's best music. You can hear the Wrecking Crew, the name given to the dozens of players by drummer Hal Blaine, on albums by the Beach Boys, Simon & Garfunkel, and others.

Soulacoaster: The Diary of Me

By R. Kelly



Equal parts genius, joker and sex-fiend, R. Kelly is a complicated man. Even though he tries to isolate these three components of his being, they inevitably spill into each other, ultimately making Kelly the compelling pop star that he is. This hilariously titled memoir is a bizarre ride through Kelly's crazy life, from Chicago's South Side to the penthouse to the courtroom to the set of his insane Trapped In The Closet.

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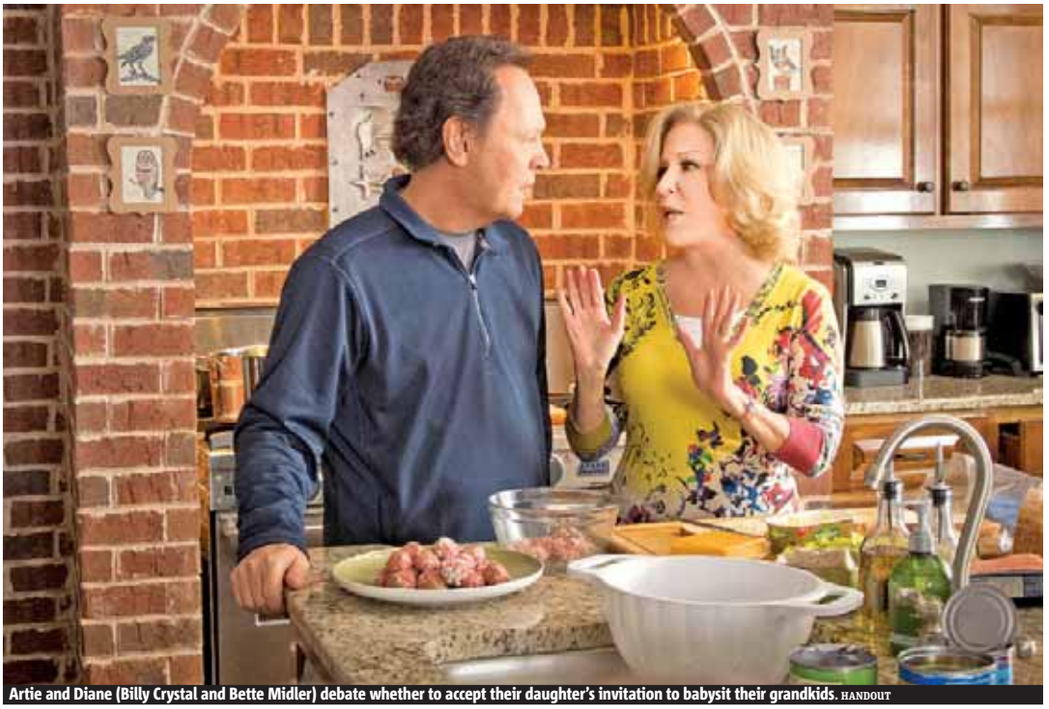
Billy Crystal dispenses some Parental Guidance

New movie. Actor talks about how grateful he is for a long career and marriage — he met his wife at 18

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News



Artie and Diane (Billy Crystal and Bette Midler) debate whether to accept their daughter's invitation to babysit their grandkids. HANDOUT

An early scene in Parental Guidance finds Billy Crystal's baseball announcer Artie Decker confused by a barrage of Twitter and Facebook-related terms lobbed at him by his boss.

While Crystal himself has become an avid and adept user of Twitter, he does share some of his character's misgivings about technology.

Pulling out his iPhone, he says, "The thing about these things — and I just got one — as a parent and a grandparent you can get called when things happen. But I hate seeing families in restaurants and they're all (looking at their phones.) They text the waiter what they want. They look so sad. The art of conversation is gone."

That condition extends beyond the family dinner hour, Crystal warns.

"What kills me also is people walking around town looking down at their phone assuming everyone else is going to stop and get out of the way," he says. "We have a world looking down."

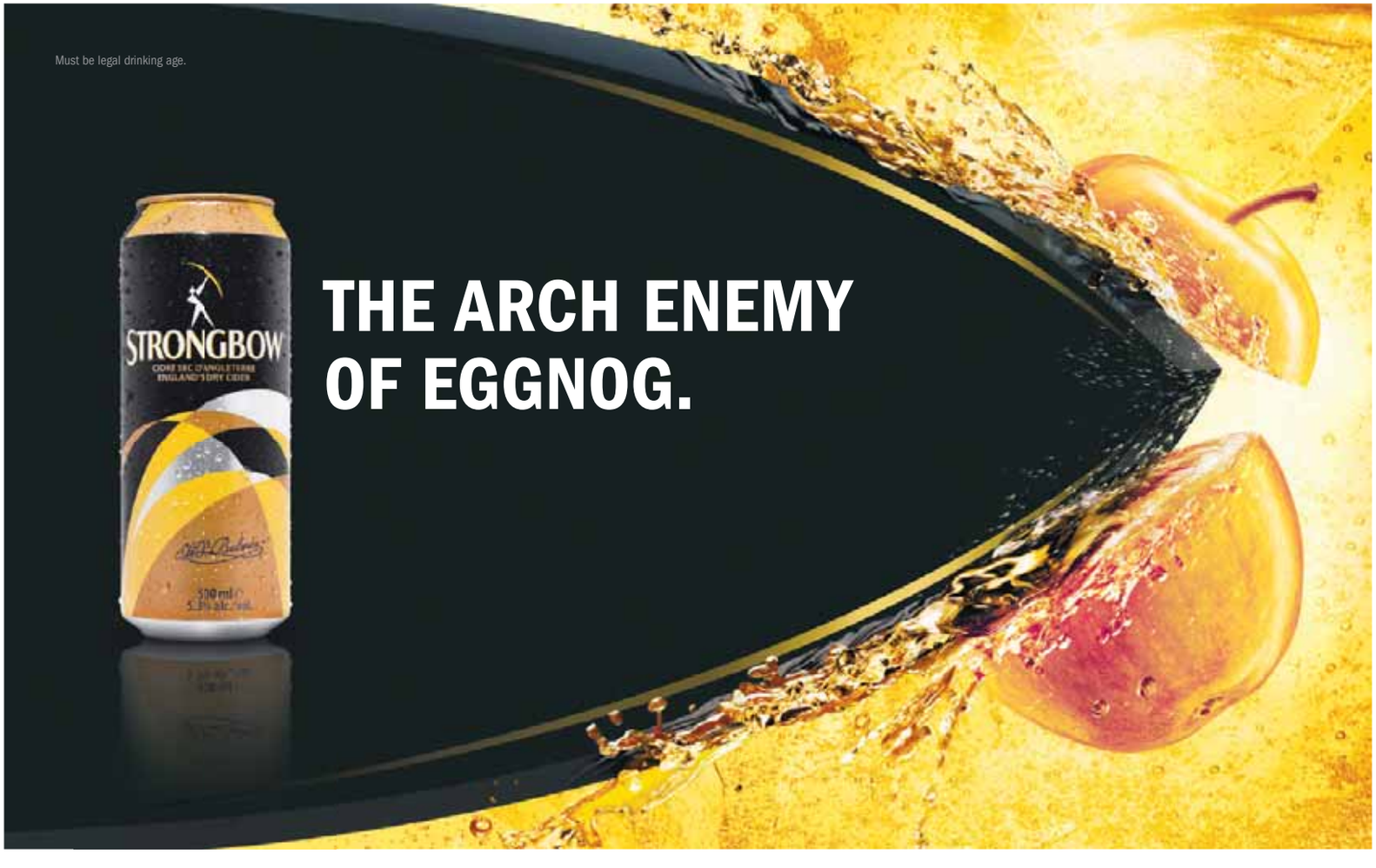
That early scene, by the way, ends with Artie getting fired at age 58 after being a minor league baseball announcer for decades, always dreaming of calling major league games for the San Francisco Giants. Luckily, 64-year-old Crystal hasn't had to see any dreams go unfulfilled himself.

"I'm shocked I've done as many things as I've done," he says. "I'm so grateful for having a long career. And I hope it gets longer. I don't take anything for granted. I'm so fortunate and lucky in my life. I met somebody who I fell in love with when I was 18. I've been married 43 years. I have two great kids, four grandchildren and another on the way. This was a dream of mine to get made and we wrestled it to the ground and got it made. If I stop now, every dream I've ever had is great. I just keep dreaming."

Quoted

"I hate seeing families in restaurants and they're all (looking at their phones) ... The art of conversation is gone."

Billy Crystal
Star of Parental Guidance



No height minimums to ride for Tom

Vertically challenged. The best-selling thrill writer, Jim Grant, is just fine with Tom Cruise taking on his beloved character Jack Reacher

DOROTHY ROBINSON
Metro World News

Stand tall Tom, you can still Cruise on this thrill ride. HANDOUT

Tom Cruise is one of the biggest movie stars in the entire world.

If he wants to take your book and turn it into a movie — as well as cast himself as the star — it's a gift from the gods. He has the money, power, and clout to make anything happen. But the one thing Cruise doesn't have?

Height.

Which is a big problem when you're supposed to be portraying Jack Reacher, the epically popular character of the Lee Child novels, who is written as six-foot-five with ice-blue eyes, dirty blond hair and tipping the scales at 240 pounds.

That does not one Tom Cruise make.

"A lot of the book fans were so upset that they weren't going to get a facsimile of Reacher on the screen," says Jim Grant at a recent press conference to promote the new film, Jack Reacher, which is based off his ninth Reacher novel, One Shot. (Lee Child is his pen name.)

"Tom Cruise isn't a big guy, sure, but portraying the inside of Reacher was so much more important," Grant said in his English lilt.

"It comes down to talent, of which there are a very limited number of people who have that level of talent and technique."

The uproar that someone who is five foot seven was tapped to play Reacher — a character who has helped to sell 60 million copies of books — reached Twilight-message-board levels of hysteria.

Grant noted that while he's happy his fans care so much, they have to understand that there aren't really any actors out there that size — a fact he knows first hand.

"In 100 years, we haven't had an actor of that size. The camera can't deal with that large of a physicality," he says.

"People said, 'What about Hugh Jackman?' Well, I was just on a plane with Hugh Jackman, and he's smaller than me and I'm smaller than Reacher. It just won't happen."

Child has published seventeen Jack Reacher novels — the 18th is out next year — and he promises that what he's seen on the screen won't influence what he writes on the page (meaning Reacher won't magically shrink and become a brunette).

"I've seen that happen, but don't worry, I've got 17 books out before the movie, soon to be 18," he notes.

"The character is so secure, nothing will replace him. To me, it's very clear in my own head that the characters in the books and movies are related, but one doesn't replace the other. The movie doesn't cancel the books or vice versa."

Quoted

"It was not really a political response, it was a human response. No one feels like going out and partying on a Saturday."

Child on postponing the U.S. Pittsburgh premiere following the deadly Connecticut school shooting.

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‘It’s gonna be cold, it’s gonna be grey, and it’s gonna last you for the rest of your life’

Movies. The classic Bill Murray quote stands the test of time as the latest mid-life crisis movie, This is 40, arrives this weekend

IN FOCUS
Richard Crouse
scene@metronews.ca

Forty isn’t old, but Leslie Mann and Paul Rudd, the leads in the new Judd Apatow comedy This is 40, are confronting middle age and not always liking what they see.

Mid-life ruts have supplied the basis for many movies.

The best-known age-angst film has to be American Beauty. Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey, who won a best actor Oscar for his work) has a classic case of the mid-life blues. Depressed, he allows himself to be pushed around by his employer and his wife and he’s developed an unhealthy crush on his daughter’s friend. To restart his life, he quits his job, blackmails his boss and deals with his wife’s infidelity.

Weatherman Phil Connors

At the beginning of Groundhog Day he’s a drunk, suicide-prone curmudgeon.

Richard Crouse, on Bill Murray’s character in Groundhog Day

“I feel like I’ve been in a coma for the past 20 years,” he says. “And I’m just now waking up.”

Things don’t work out well for Lester, but weatherman Phil Connors’s (Bill Murray) mid life crisis has a better outcome.

At the beginning of Groundhog Day he’s a drunk, suicide-prone curmudgeon who sums up his outlook like this, “I’ll give you a winter prediction: It’s gonna be cold, it’s gonna be grey, and it’s gonna last you for the rest of your life.”

Robert Smigel, left, gives advice to Paul Rudd in This Is 40, an unfiltered, comedic look inside the life of an American family from writer/director/producer Judd Apatow. HANDOUT

When he starts living the same day over and over again, however, he begins to see the beauty of life.

Bill Murray is also forced to reflect on his existence in Broken Flowers, when he receives a mysterious letter telling him of a son he didn’t know about.

“Well, the past is gone, I know that,” he says. “The future isn’t here yet, whatever it’s going to be. So, all there is, is this. The present. That’s it.”

Mid-life crises aren’t the just the domain of men, however.

In The Bridges of Madison County, Meryl Streep plays Francesca, an Iowa housewife who shatters the midlife doldrums by having a brief but meaningful affair with National Geographic photographer Robert Kincaid (played by Clint Eastwood). Of her affair she says, “everything I knew to be true about myself up until then was gone. I was acting like another woman, yet I was more myself than ever before.”

The best-loved mid-life movie might be Shirley Valentine, the bittersweet tale of an English housewife who leaves her humdrum existence behind for a happier life in the Greek islands.

“I used to be The Mother,” she says. “I used to be The Wife. But now I’m Shirley Valentine again.”

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Kristen Stewart ALL PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

K-Stew's sorry for her cheatin' heart

Kristen Stewart knows she's upset more than a few fans over the course of her Twilight tenure — especially since her summer cheating scandal. "I apologize to everyone for making them so angry. It was not my intention," the actress tells Newsweek. "It's not a terrible thing if you're either loved or hated. But honestly, I don't care because it doesn't keep me from doing my s—." And as for the hugely successful vampire franchise coming to an end? "The only relief when it comes to Twilight is that the story is done," she admits.

Angelina Jolie

Angelina Jolie dusts off her director's hat

Angelina Jolie is set to return to the director's chair, choosing to adapt Laura Hillenbrand's Second World War survival story, Unbroken, as her second film, according to E! News. The story follows Louis Zamperini, an air force pilot who survived a crash and spent most of the war in a Japanese prison camp. "I read Laura Hillenbrand's brilliant book and I was so moved by Louis Zamperini's heroic story, I immediately began to fight for the opportunity to make this film," Jolie says. Her directorial debut, In the Land of Blood and Honey, focused on the Bosnian war.

The Word

The year of the lost locks — femmes who took it all off

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

No more long locks for these ladies. Whether it was for a role of a lifetime or to bring awareness to a cause, here are some haircuts that turned heads this year.

Who: Anne Hathaway
Why: The actress had to shave her head for her role as the prostitute Fantine in Les Misérables.
Current length: Short. "I love the short-haired lifestyle," Hathaway says in the December issue of Vogue. "I'm turning 30, and — I hope this isn't obnoxious to say — I feel prettier, and much more myself. I guess I just feel much more satisfied with less now."

Who: Charlize Theron
Why: Theron's shaved head is courtesy of her latest film role, Mad Max: Fury Road.
Current length: Still shaved.

Who: Kellie Pickler
Why: The American Idol singer got a buzz cut to support her best friend, Summer Miller, who had to undergo chemotherapy while being treated for breast cancer.
Current length: Growing out a tad. "We made a pact from the get-go that we would shave our heads together," Pickler told E! Online about sharing the look with her best pal. "And we did."

Who: Miley Cyrus
Why: Who knows. Probably because she's aching to be seen as more "edgy" than her Disney roots.
Current length: It's not so much talking about length as it is talking about the crazy. As she wrote on Twitter when she originally lost the locks, "Never felt more me in my whole life."

Kate Middleton

Kate Middleton determined to make the Royal Christmas

Despite her recent pregnancy-related hospitalization, Kate Middleton is vowing to put on a brave face for the Royal Family's Christmas dinner, according to Radar Online. "Kate doesn't want to disappoint the Queen, nor does she want to skip on her duties," a source says.

"She feels she is obliged to appear at the annual Christmas dinner and doesn't want to let anyone down." Her husband, though, is offering an out. "William has his concerns though that she won't be up to it, and told Kate she shouldn't worry if she feels too sick to attend and that no one will judge her negatively," the source adds. "But Kate isn't having it and is determined to be at the dinner, smiling as always."

Twitter

@JLo
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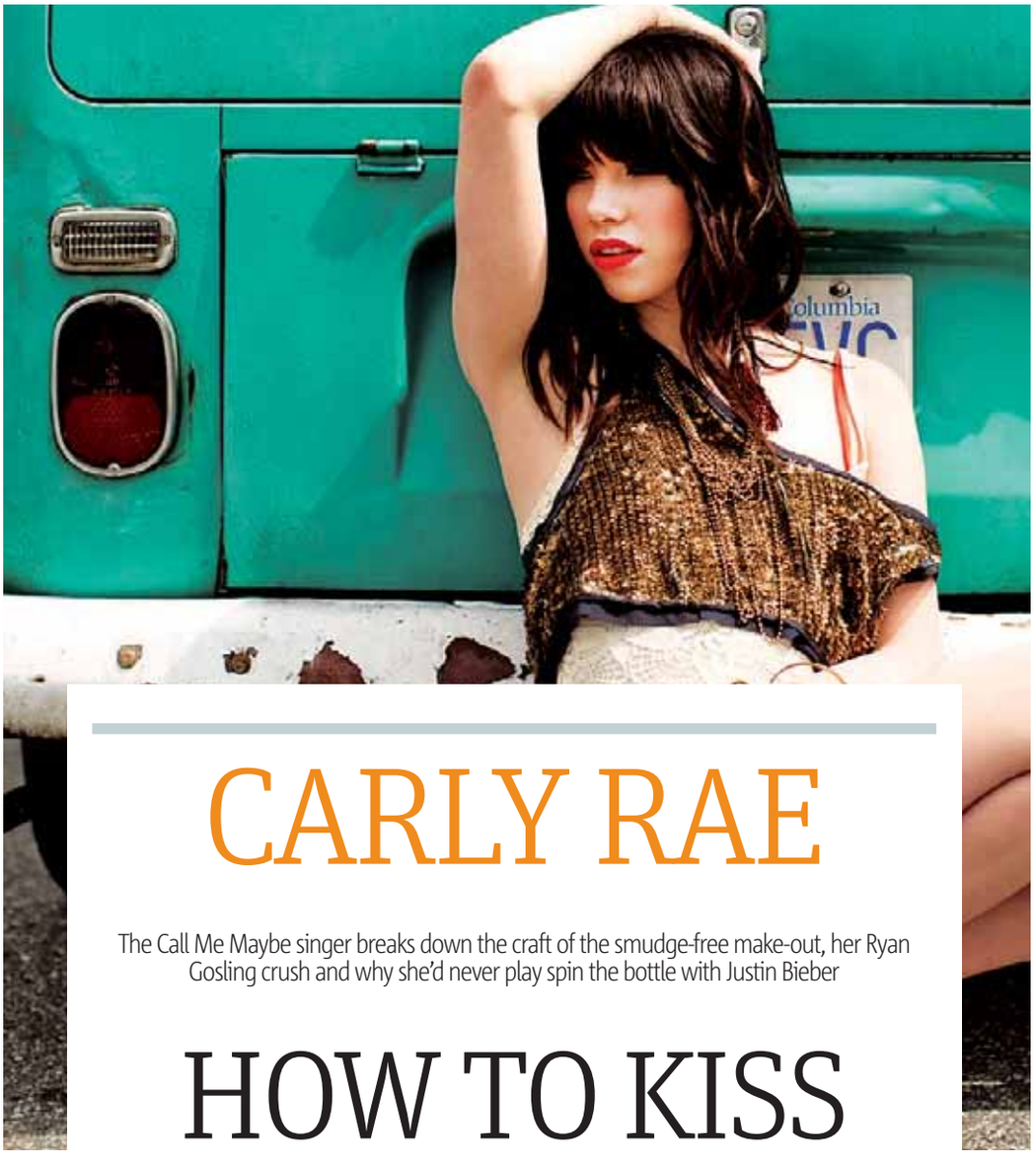

CARLY RAE

The Call Me Maybe singer breaks down the craft of the smudge-free make-out, her Ryan Gosling crush and why she'd never play spin the bottle with Justin Bieber

HOW TO KISS

ROMINA MCGUINNESS
life@metronews.ca

As she promotes her new album, Kiss, we asked Carly Rae Jepsen about makeup application and the art of making out, because we figured she must be an expert at it by now.

Putting the makeup on...
"For a press event, I need one hour for my hair and makeup. But if it's just for me, I literally need 10 minutes. My grooming process has become shorter and shorter in my off-days. I like getting glammed up for the red carpet, but then being able to wear no makeup and be in flannel for a camping weekend. I'm like, 'Take me as I am.'"

The spin the bottle test. Ryan Gosling — yay or nay?
"I've always had a thing for Ryan Gosling. I don't think I'm alone in that! There's not one movie of his that I haven't liked. It's his personality. I've never met him, but the characters he plays are very charming."

And Justin Bieber?
"He's my friend, that would be too strange. We would never play that game together!"

On making out
"I've always had fairly pleasant experiences, but not, like, a lot of them! Kissing is all about how you feel about the person. If you have no chemistry, it can be totally meaningless. But if you have the right amount of flare, then it can be a really magical moment. I don't know if I'm a good kisser. I hope so."

Video

Watch Carly Rae Jepsen give a tutorial on how to kiss without smudging your lipstick on metronews.ca

Holiday party skin savers

These are two products to turn to when the party starts showing up on your face

KENYA HUNT
life@metronews.ca

La Prairie Advanced Marine Biology Day Cream SPF 20

$135, laprairie.com.
Grab this potent face cream to recover from all of that dehydrating holiday drinking.

Lancôme Visionnaire Advanced Skin Corrector

$60, lancome.com.
This is the serum to fill out those forehead creases that pop up after too many nights spent squinting in dark clubs.

Inside her makeup bag

Carly Rae Jepsen opens up her purse to show us the products she can't get through the day without

MAC Lipstick in Lady Danger

"I'm obsessed with this. It's a statement piece. It's kind of like an orangey red, but the perfect shade of it. It's a good pick-me-up if you have to get dolled up fast."

Marc Jacobs Daisy Eau de Parfum

"I'm really picky with scents. I can get sick of them after a day or two. Daisy has been one that I've really hung on to. It's not too domineering, really pleasant and kind of subtle. It feels really fresh every time I spray it on."

MAC Eye Kohl in Teddy, Giorgio Armani mascara and Maestro Fusion foundation

"If I'm doing my own makeup, and it's not for press, these are the three things I always use."

Classic gifts for the pickiest decorator

Imagine having the task of buying a Christmas present for someone who not only has it all, but seemingly has great taste and knows what they like. That's what my family and friends run up against every Christmas — trying to buy me something I don't already have or will like enough to have in my home. Truth be told, designers are probably the simplest to buy for, as long as you don't give short-lived trend items. By keeping the choices classic and useful, your gift will be a hit with your favourite design aficionado. Here's a few that topped my wish list this holiday season. Some cost as little as a dollar and some hundreds. I'd love all of them under my tree this year, Mr. Santa...

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

The fuzzy feeling

Whether it be real or faux, a fur throw slung over a chair or end of the bed has always made a luxurious statement in the home. From year to year the fur colours change (this year it's pale browns and greys), and there is always an animal print in fashion. Take a cue from designer Brian Gluckstein and his collection of throws (with a handsome leather carry handle) and live like a designer. Faux Fur Throw, $149, thebay.com.

Clink, clink on the cheap

Nothing breaks the mood of a fancy party than having to use the wrong glass when toasting a celebration. And trust me, using a wine glass to serve champagne does not impress anyone who is style conscious. I like to stock up on glass ones and have plenty of them. My go-to store is the Dollarama. Glass Champagne Flutes, $1, dollarama.com.

A simple touch

A decorative box can sit handsomely on a front foyer table to hold keys, coins and cards, or on a dresser to hold jewelry, pens and keepsakes in the bedroom. The Agresti Gold Leaf Box adds simple lines and a subtle gold shine to decorate any table or dresser top. $795, birks.com.

Crystal accent

The classic round shape of the rose bowl (or goldfish bowl, as it's commonly called) is perfect for flowers. Three rose bowls in a row creates a modern appeal down the centre of a dining table or on a mantel. Tiffany's Floral Vine Rose Bowl holds a dozen red roses, a candle and more, $330, tiffany.ca.

Light it up

There is no decorator out there that doesn't like candles, and even better are a collection of candles on a tray. It's the perfect centrepiece on a dining table, coffee table or in the bath. Inexpensive candles mean filling the tray without breaking the bank. Glade Winter Collection Candles, $5.50 each, glade.ca.

Charger chic

Decorate the simplest of china by adding a layer of silver underneath. Charger plates create instant shimmer and luxury to a dinner party table. Add cool silver shine and the natural imprint of woodgrain with charger plates from President's Choice, $10 for 4. loblaws.ca.

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Is this the last supper?

A bite of Belize. This country was once home to the ancient Mayans, who are said to have predicted the end of the world on Dec. 21. If that's the case, go out with a full stomach

"Cochinita (small pig) pibil (to bury) literally translates to 'buried whole suckling pig,'" write the editors of Flavors of Belize magazine in their book of the same name about this recipe.

"Traditionally, you should marinate the pork in the same manner but cook the whole pig wrapped in banana leaves underground with fire wood and hot stones for hours until tender."

This recipe by Chef Sean Kuylen can also be cooked in a slow cooker, on low for 12 hours or on high for six hours.

Ingredients

- 5 lbs pork shoulder or pork leg, bone in
- 1 head garlic
- 1 1/2 tbsp salt
- 2 tsp cumin
- 1 1/2 tsp allspice
- 1 1/2 tbsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tbsp red recado, diluted to form paste
- 1/2 cup sour orange juice
- Smoked banana leaves
- 2 medium onions, quartered
- 2 medium green bell peppers, quartered
- 1/4 cup cilantro, minced

1. Preheat oven to 325 F. Pierce pork with knife and insert garlic cloves all around.

2. Mix all dry ingredients; combine with recado, diluted in orange juice and coat pork. Marinate overnight.

3. Place pork in large roasting pan lined with banana leaves. Add onion, sweet pepper and place cilantro on top. Pour remaining marinade liquid and add more water to pan to approximately 1 inch high. Cover with banana leaves and seal tightly with foil.

4. Bake for 5 hours or until meat is very tender and starts to release from the bone. Shred pork and serve on warm corn tortillas topped with pickled red onions or habanero salsa.

ALL RECIPES ON THIS PAGE FROM FLAVORS OF BELIZE: THE COOKBOOK (MCNAB PUBLISHING LTD)

Pureco Cochinita Pibil

This recipe serves eight. MATT ARMENDARIZ FOR FLAVORS OF BELIZE: THE COOKBOOK

Dukunu. In ancient Mayan culture, corn was considered a gift from gods

Ingredients

- 10 to 12 green corn on the cob, shucked
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup coconut milk
- 2 tbsp butter, melted
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 2 tsp sugar
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. Peel corn, reserving clean husks. Purée corn with water in a blender. Pour into a large mixing bowl and mix with the remaining ingredients.

2. Place 1/4 to 1/3 cup mixture onto the centre of each reserved husk. Bring sides together, making sure to overlap and fold pointed end upward. Secure each with string.

3. Place 2 to 3 inches of water in sauce pot, bring to a boil and arrange dukunu folded side down. Boil for about 1/2 hour. Remove from husk and serve.

Cookbook of the Week

Dine like the Mayans

Published by McNab Publishing Ltd., Flavors of Belize includes a selection of soups and starters, main dishes and delectable desserts.

Additionally, this cookbook hosts a variety of submissions from some of Belize's most renowned chefs and cooks.

Each section opens with a brief explanation of the different cultures, whose history acts as the foundation of Belizean heritage.

This colourful gastronomic guide delivers more than 120 recipes spanning cultures including the Maya, British, Mestizo, Creole, Chinese, Lebanese, Garifuna and more.

METRO

Armin Niederer of Switzerland, third from left, performs during the final race on his way to winning a men's ski cross World Cup event ahead of Calgary's Brady Leman, right, American Joe Swensson, second from left, and London, Ont.'s David Duncan on Wednesday in Val Thorens, France. LAURENT CIPRIANI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Silver not enough for Calgary's Leman

Skicross. Local racer says slow start out of gate was difference between second and first place at World Cup event

Quoted

"It's only a matter of time until we're standing on the top of the podium with either one of those guys."

Skicross coach Eric Asher on racers Brady Leman and Dave Duncan

Brady Leman says he won't be satisfied with anything less than first place in his next skicross race.

The Calgary native continues to shine on the World Cup circuit after winning his second silver medal in as many races Wednesday in Val Thorens, France. But after two close losses, Leman wants his turn on top of the podium.

"I'm always happy to be on the podium for sure — I'm proud of what I did today — but that said, I want to win, I'm not out there to come second," he said after Wednesday's result.

Leman was edged by Armin Niederer of Switzerland, who won the race. Niederer also leads Leman in the overall World Cup standings.

Dave Duncan of London, Ont., finished fourth, after both Canadian skiers had trouble out of the gate.

"Both Dunc and I kind of messed up out of the gate. I hooked my ski on something, I don't know what happened really," said Leman.

It left him third at the start but he passed American Joe Swensson and had a chance to pass Niederer.

"He must have sensed it and did a nice little swerve to keep me behind him."

Duncan couldn't get past Swensson to get into third.

"I had two amazing starts and two not-so-amazing starts," he said of the crowded day, which crammed in training, qualifiers and the final after weather issues the previous two days.

"In the final I just missed my pole out of the gate, the initial pole, and those three guys took off on me and I couldn't make a pass on Joe Swensson to get into third."

Louis-Pierre Helie, of Berthierville, Que., finished 18th overall, Tristan Tafel, of Canmore, 23rd and Mathieu Leduc, of Comox, B.C., failed to qualify and finished 45th.

Reigning world champion Kelsey Serwa of Kelowna, B.C., finished 15th after being eliminated in the quarter-final round and was the top Canadian on the women's side.

Calgary's Danielle Sundquist missed qualifying by one spot, finishing 17th. Marielle Thompson, of Whistler, B.C., last year's Crystal Globe winner as World Cup champion, was 23rd and Mariannick Therer, of Saint-Sauveur, Que., was 27th.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

CFL

Eskimos extend Sherritt's contract

The Edmonton Eskimos will head into next season with the cornerstone of their defence locked up.

The Eskimos have signed reigning CFL defensive player of the year JC Sherritt to a contract extension through the 2015 season, the club announced Wednesday.

Sherritt made a record-setting 130 defensive tackles in 2012. He also recorded three sacks, three special-teams tackles, three forced fumbles, one fumble recovery, two knockdowns and five interceptions for 56 yards.

He earned 49 of the 57 votes cast by CFL coaches and members of the Football Reporters of Canada to win the defensive player of the year award.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

CFL

Argos release safety Boulay

The off-season house cleaning continues for the Toronto Argonauts.

The Argonauts released veteran safety Etienne Boulay on Wednesday, one day after cutting loose veteran kicker/punter Noel Prefontaine.

Boulay, a Montreal native, joined the Argos in the off-season and started 13 regular-season games for the club, registering five special-teams tackles.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Etienne Boulay
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Knicks knock down Nets

New York Knicks centre Tyson Chandler dunks against Brooklyn Nets forward Gerald Wallace on Wednesday night at Madison Square Garden. Carmelo Anthony scored 31 points for the Knicks in a 100-86 win over Brooklyn. AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

NHLPA waiting on NHL to resume talks: Fehr

Lockout. League not sure progress can be made at this point

Donald Fehr says the NHL Players' Association is ready to get back to the bargaining table at any moment.

He's just waiting for the NHL to feel the same way.

"(We aren't talking) because the owners have not indicated a desire to resume," the NHLPA's executive director said Wednesday night before a charity game. "We've indicated any number of times that we're willing to resume when they are (and) we're willing to resume without preconditions.

"So we're waiting to hear back from them."

The sides haven't negotiated with one another since Dec. 6 in New York, when talks broke down. They also met with a U.S. federal mediator for two days in New Jersey last week and reported no progress.

From the NHL's perspective, negotiations should only resume once there is something new to say.

"I don't think either party is refusing a meeting," deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in an email. "But unless there is an indication one side or the other is prepared to move or has a new idea to move the process forward — and so far neither side has indicated — I am not sure what we would do at the meeting.

"What is the agenda? Who is directing the conversation?"

Fehr indicated that he liked the idea put forward by Winnipeg Jets defenceman Ron Hainsey that the same parties who met two weeks ago return to the bargaining table, plus himself and commissioner Gary Bettman. Progress was made during a session that included four new owners and a number of players, including Sidney Crosby.

"That seems like it might work if the owners are interested in it," said Fehr.

However, Daly indicated that it didn't hold much appeal.

The deputy commissioner created a stir earlier in the day when he made an appearance on CBC's HNIC Radio and was asked to give a simple yes or no answer on whether there would be an agreement in time to save the season. He responded "yes."

"That's good news," said Fehr. "I'm glad to hear that. I certainly hope he's right. That's the players' goal, that's what we want to try and do.

"Hopefully, we'll get back together and negotiate out the remaining issues as soon as possible." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"We don't have anything new to say right now."

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly on the status of negotiations.

Taking back Stanley?

Reclaiming cup not on GG's mind

The Stanley Cup may have been created by the office of Canada's Governor General — but don't count on the current office-holder to take the trophy back.

Gov. Gen. David Johnston chuckled when asked whether the prospect of a cancelled season could prompt him to reclaim Canada's beloved relic.

Edmonton MP Brent Rathgeber has suggested the cup could be awarded in a competition to determine the best non-pro team in Canada. Also, one of the cup's full-time guardians recently said it would be "exciting" to have a mock tournament if the season is cancelled. THE CANADIAN PRESS

NBA

On the rise: Raptors win 4th straight

The doom and gloom that surrounded the Toronto Raptors just a week ago feels like a distant memory.

DeMar DeRozan scored 23 points and Jose Calderon added 17 assists as the Raptors won their fourth straight for the first time in over two years with a 97-91 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Wednesday.

The surprising win streak comes on the heels of a six-game slide that included a dispiriting road trip, injuries, a suspension and general manager Bryan Colangelo calling the team's play "unacceptable."

Since then the Raptors (8-19) have beaten Dallas, Houston and Cleveland, to go along with Wednesday's victory, for the club's first four-game surge since Nov. 17-24, 2010.

"Right now we're finding ways to win and that's the most important thing for our group," said Raptors head coach Dwane Casey. "Now we're believing we can win, we're trusting each other, and we're pulling for each other." THE CANADIAN PRESS

CFL bound? Tebow talk turns to possible sojourn to try Canadian game

To Tebow or not to Tebow.

That's the CFL question.

With the New York Jets electing to bypass quarterback Tim Tebow as starter Mark Sanchez's replacement for Sunday's game, there have been plenty of speculation and rumours out of the NFL that he might just leave and try tossing footballs next season in Canada.

Apparently, his negotiation rights are now held by the Montreal Alouettes, who just signed 40-year-old Anthony Calvillo to a new two-year contract.

The Hamilton Tiger-Cats used to have the former first-round NFL draft pick's negotiating rights but dropped him during the season.

Negotiating rights are secret in the CFL so it's only speculative that Montreal has them right now. But sources suggest they do.

Several CFL teams need a quarterback, Winnipeg for one. But even if the Jets release him, chances are some other NFL team will take a shot at him.

Tebow hasn't started a single game since being traded to the Jets from Denver in the offseason. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Tim Tebow, left, was passed up for the New York Jets' starting quarterback job for the final two games of the NFL regular season. RICK SCHULTZ/GETTY IMAGES

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NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	19	6	.760	—
Miami	16	6	.727	11/2
Atlanta	15	8	.652	3
Chicago	14	10	.583	41/2
Milwaukee	13	11	.542	51/2
Indiana	14	12	.538	51/2
Brooklyn	13	12	.520	6
Boston	13	12	.520	6
Orlando	12	13	.480	7
Philadelphia	12	14	.462	71/2
Toronto	8	19	.296	12
Charlotte	7	18	.280	12
Detroit	7	21	.250	131/2
Cleveland	5	22	.185	15
Washington	3	20	.130	15

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	21	4	.840	—
L.A. Clippers	18	6	.750	21/2
Memphis	17	6	.739	3
San Antonio	19	8	.704	3
Golden State	17	8	.680	4
Denver	14	12	.538	71/2
Minnesota	12	11	.522	8
Houston	13	12	.520	8
Utah	14	13	.519	8
Dallas	12	13	.480	9
Portland	11	12	.478	9
L.A. Lakers	12	14	.462	91/2
Phoenix	11	15	.423	101/2
Sacramento	7	17	.292	131/2
New Orleans	5	19	.208	151/2

Division leaders ranked in top three positions and best eight teams qualify for playoffs

Wednesday's results

Indiana 104 Utah 84
Toronto 97 Detroit 91
New York 100 Brooklyn 86
Orlando 90 Washington 83
Oklahoma City 100 Atlanta 92
Boston 103 Cleveland 91
Houston 125 Philadelphia 103
Phoenix 121 Charlotte 104
Memphis 90 Milwaukee 80
Golden State at Sacramento
New Orleans at L.A. Clippers

Tuesday's results

Toronto 113 Cleveland 99
Atlanta 100 Washington 95 OT
Utah 92 Brooklyn 90
Miami 103 Minnesota 92
Chicago 100 Boston 89
Milwaukee 98 Indiana 93
Dallas 107 Philadelphia 100
Denver 112 San Antonio 106
L.A. Lakers 101 Charlotte 100
Golden State 103 New Orleans 96

Thursday's games

Oklahoma City at Minnesota, 7 p.m.
Miami at Dallas, 9:30 p.m.
Denver at Portland, 10 p.m.

Friday's games

Atlanta at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Orlando at Toronto, 7 p.m.
Chicago at New York, 7:30 p.m.
Milwaukee at Boston, 7:30 p.m.
Washington at Detroit, 7:30 p.m.
Indiana at Cleveland, 7:30 p.m.
Dallas at Memphis, 8 p.m.
New Orleans at San Antonio, 8:30 p.m.
Charlotte at Golden State, 10:30 p.m.
Sacramento at L.A. Clippers, 10:30 p.m.

RAPTORS 97, PISTONS 91

DETROIT (91)

Prince 3-6 3-4 9, Maxiell 2-6 2-4 6, Monroe 14-22 7-8 35, Knight 1-10 0-0 2, Singler 3-9 2-2 9, Stuckey 5-12 2-5 13, Drummond 2-3 2-7 6, Daye 1-6 0-0 3, Villanueva 4-10 0-0 8. Totals 35-84 18-30 91.

TORONTO (97)

Pietrus 2-3 2-2 7, Davis 5-7 1-2 11, Valanciunas 5-6 2-2 12, Calderon 2-8 1-1 7, DeRozan 10-19 1-2 23, Anderson 4-11 5-7 16, Kleiza 1-6 2-2 5, Lucas 1-5 0-0 2, Ross 4-6 0-0 9, Johnson 1-1 3-4 5. Totals 35-72 17-22 97.

Detroit	23	26	22	20—91
Toronto	27	22	24	24—97

3-Point Goals—Detroit 3-12 (Stuckey 1-1, Singler 1-2, Daye 1-3, Knight 0-1, Villanueva 0-5), Toronto 10-29 (Anderson 3-8, DeRozan 2-4, Calderon 2-5, Ross 1-1, Pietrus 1-2, Kleiza 1-6, Lucas 0-3). Fouled Out—Singler. Rebounds—Detroit 64 (Monroe 10), Toronto 39 (Johnson, Davis 9). Assists—Detroit 15 (Knight 6), Toronto 26 (Calderon 17). Total Fouls—Detroit 19, Toronto 24. Technicals—Drummond. A—17,062 (19,800).

AHL

Wednesday's result

Chicago 1 Abbotsford 0
Adirondack 3 St. John's 2
Bridgeport 4 Albany 3
Grand Rapids 4 Rochester 2
Hershey 4 Norfolk 0
Lake Erie 4 Toronto 3 (OT)
Portland 3 Springfield 2
Binghamton 4 Wilkes-Barre/Scranton 3
Rockford 3 Milwaukee 1
Texas 2 San Antonio 0

Tuesday's result

Peoria 4 Hamilton 3 (SO)

Thursday's games

All Times Eastern

Houston at Lake Erie, 7 p.m.
Peoria at Charlotte, 7 p.m.

Friday's games

Connecticut at Manchester, 7 p.m.
San Antonio at Toronto, 7 p.m.
Peoria at Charlotte, 7 p.m.
Abbotsford at Grand Rapids, 7 p.m.
Binghamton at Rochester, 7:05 p.m.
Worcester at Providence, 7:05 p.m.
St. John's at Hamilton, 7:30 p.m.
Albany at Norfolk, 7:30 p.m.
Adirondack at Syracuse, 7:30 p.m.
Rockford at Milwaukee, 8 p.m.
Texas at Oklahoma City, 8 p.m.

SOCCER

SCOTLAND

DIVISION 3

Tuesday's result

East Stirlingshire 2, Montrose 2

DFB POKAL

THIRD ROUND

Tuesday's results

Bochum 3, 1860 Munich 0
Borussia Dortmund 5, Hannover 1
Stuttgart 2, Cologne 1
Wolfsburg 2, Bayer Leverkusen 1

TRANSACTIONS

MLB

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE — Suspended free agent minor league RHP Kyle Pelchy 50 games for refusing to take an off-season drug test.

AMERICAN LEAGUE

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Agreed to terms with 1B Travis Ishikawa, LHP Daniel Schlereth and LHP Zach Braddock on minor league contracts.
BOSTON RED SOX — Agreed to terms with RHP Ryan Dempster on a two-year contract. Designated RHP Pedro Beato for assignment.
CLEVELAND INDIANS — Designated OF Russ Canzler for assignment. Agreed to terms with RHP Joe Martinez and C Brian Jeroloman on minor league contracts.
DETROIT TIGERS — Released LHP Adam Wilk. Assigned LHP Matt Hoffman outright to Toledo (EL).
HOUSTON ASTROS — Named Meg Vail-lancourt vice president of community relations and executive director of the Astros In Action Foundation. Traded LHP Rob Rasmussen to the L.A. Dodgers for RHP John Ely.
NEW YORK YANKEES — Agreed to terms with OF Ichiro Suzuki on a two-year contract. Designated RHP Jim Miller for assignment.
SEATTLE MARINERS — Traded LHP Jason Vargas to the L.A. Angels for 1B/DH Kendrys Morales.
TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Agreed to terms with 2B Lance Zawadzki on a minor league contract. Claimed RHP Mickey Storey off waivers from Houston.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Named Steve Sax first base coach and Turner Ward assistant hitting coach. Named Greg Gross hitting coach of Reno (PCL); Andy Green manager and Jacob Cruz hitting coach of Mobile (SL); Bill Plummer manager and Gil Heredia pitching coach of Visalia (Cal); Jason Camilli hitting coach of South Bend (MWL); Robby Hammock manager, Doug Bochtler pitching coach and Wilson Valera hitting coach of Missoula (Pioneer); and Luis Urueta manager of the Arizona League Diamondbacks.
COLORADO ROCKIES — Agreed to terms with LHP Jeff Francis on a one-year contract.
MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Agreed to terms with RHP Alfredo Figaro on a minor league contract.

FRONTIER LEAGUE

LAKE ERIE CRUSHERS — Named Jeff Isom manager.
RIVER CITY RASCALS — Signed 1B Mike Bando and 3B Jason Taylor to contract extensions.
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS MINERS — Sent LHP Nick Cicio and LHP Darrin Tew to Rockford to complete an earlier trade.
TRAVERSE CITY BEACH BUMS — Signed 2B Ryan Still to a contract extension. Released LHP Bennett Whitmore. Exercised the 2013 contract options on LHP Nick Capito, RHP Jason Mattila, RHP Scott Dunn, RHP Brooks Belter, RHP Michael Devine, RHP Jacob Clem, RHP Scott Mueller, RHP Jake Sabol, C Travis Higgs, C Marcus Nififfer, INF Jose Vargas, INF Kyle Eveland, INF Chase Burch, INF Jeff Flagg, INF Sean Gusrang, OF Kyle Colligan, OF Matt Howard, OF Brian Heere, RHP Reid Kelly and RHP Kurt Wunderlich.

NFL

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Released TE Steve Skelton from the practice squad.
BALTIMORE RAVENS — Released LB D.J. Bryant from the practice squad. Signed RB Lonyae Miller to the practice squad.
BUFFALO BILLS — Signed WR Kevin Elliott and LB Brian Smith to the practice squad.
CAROLINA PANTHERS — Placed C Zack Williams on injured reserve. Signed G Hayworth Hicks from the practice squad.
CHICAGO BEARS — Signed G Reggie Stephens to the practice squad.
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Signed TE George Bryan to the practice squad.
DALLAS COWBOYS — Released DE Robert Rose from the practice squad.
DETROIT LIONS — Placed CB Jacob Lacey on injured reserve. Signed CB Rob Bartell. Signed DB Ross Weaver to the practice squad. Placed DT Nick Fairley on injured reserve. Signed DT Ogemdi Nwagbuo.
GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed CB Otis Merrill to the practice squad.
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Released G Robert Griffin from the practice squad. Signed T Lee Ziemba to the practice squad.
MIAMI DOLPHINS — Placed RB Daniel Thomas on injured reserve. Signed DB Julian Posey from the practice squad.
NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Placed CB Corey White on injured reserve. Signed WR Saalim Hakim from the practice squad.
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Placed TE Clay Harbor on injured reserve.
PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Reinstated RB Rashard Mendenhall from the suspended list. Placed G Willie Colon and CB DeMarcus Van Dyke on injured reserve. Signed DB Justin King.
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Signed LB Kyle Knox and DE Monte Taylor to the practice squad.
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Signed TE Drake Dunsmore and LB Joe Holland to the practice squad.
WASHINGTON REDSKINS — Released LB Kourtnei Brown from the practice squad.

CFL

TORONTO ARGONAUTS — Released S Etienne Boulay. Re-signed DL Donte Paige-Moss. Signed LB Shane Horton.

AHL

ALBANY DEVILS — Loaned C Phil DeSimone to Trenton (ECHL).
BRIDGEPORT SOUND TIGERS — Signed F Scott Campbell to a professional tryout contract.

MLS

CHICAGO FIRE — Announced the resignation of president Julian Posada.
D.C. UNITED — Re-signed D Robbie Russell.

NFL

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

EAST

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New England	10	4	0	.714	506	315
N.Y. Jets	6	8	0	.429	255	320
Miami	6	8	0	.429	264	279
Buffalo	5	9	0	.357	306	402

SOUTH

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Houston	12	2	0	.857	394	280
Indianapolis	9	5	0	.643	309	358
Tennessee	5	9	0	.357	285	396
Jacksonville	2	12	0	.143	219	383

NORTH

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Baltimore	9	5	0	.643	348	307
Cincinnati	8	6	0	.571	355	293
Pittsburgh	7	7	0	.500	302	291
Cleveland	5	9	0	.357	280	310

WEST

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Denver	11	3	0	.786	409	274
San Diego	5	9	0	.357	299	312
Oakland	4	10	0	.286	263	402
Kansas City	2	12	0	.143	195	367

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

EAST

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Washington	8	6	0	.571	381	350
Dallas	8	6	0	.571	327	338
N.Y. Giants	8	6	0	.571	373	304
Philadelphia	4	10	0	.286	253	375

SOUTH

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Atlanta	12	2	0	.857	371	259
New Orleans	6	8	0	.429	389	379
Tampa Bay	6	8	0	.429	354	349
Carolina	5	9	0	.357	296	319

NORTH

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Green Bay	10	4	0	.714	344	292
Minnesota	8	6	0	.571	319	308
Chicago	8	6	0	.571	321	240
Detroit	4	10	0	.286	330	380

WEST

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
San Francisco	10	3	1	.750	357	218
Seattle	9	5	0	.643	350	219
St. Louis	6	7	1	.464	258	315
Arizona	5	9	0	.357	224	302

x — clinched playoff berth; y — clinched division.

WEEK 16

Saturday's game — All Times Eastern

Atlanta at Detroit, 8:30 p.m.

Sunday's games

Minnesota at Houston, 1 p.m.
Tennessee at Green Bay, 1 p.m.
Oakland at Carolina, 1 p.m.
San Diego at N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.
New England at Jacksonville, 1 p.m.
Indianapolis at Kansas City, 1 p.m.
New Orleans at Dallas, 1 p.m.
St. Louis at Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.
Buffalo at Miami, 1 p.m.
Cincinnati at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.
Washington at Philadelphia, 1 p.m.
Cleveland at Denver, 4:05 p.m.
N.Y. Giants at Baltimore, 4:25 p.m.
Chicago at Arizona, 4:25 p.m.
San Francisco at Seattle, 8:20 p.m.

WEEK 17

Sunday, Dec. 30

Tampa Bay at Atlanta, 1 p.m.
N.Y. Jets at Buffalo, 1 p.m.
Baltimore at Cincinnati, 1 p.m.
Chicago at Detroit, 1 p.m.
Houston at Indianapolis, 1 p.m.
Green Bay at Minnesota, 1 p.m.
Miami at New England, 1 p.m.
Carolina at New Orleans, 1 p.m.
Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.
Cleveland at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.
Jacksonville at Tennessee, 1 p.m.
Dallas at Washington, 1 p.m.
Kansas City at Denver, 4:15 p.m.
Oakland at San Diego, 4:15 p.m.
Arizona at San Francisco, 4:15 p.m.
St. Louis at Seattle, 4:15 p.m.
Note: Sunday night game to be determined

END OF REGULAR SEASON

HOCKEY

2013 CANADIAN WORLD JUNIOR HOCKEY TEAM ROSTER

Roster for the Canadian junior hockey team for the 2013 world junior championship Dec. 26-Jan. 5 in Ufa, Russia:

GOALTENDERS

Jordan Binnington, Richmond Hill, Ont., Owen Sound (OHL); Jake Paterson, Mississauga, Ont., Saginaw (OHL); Malcolm Subban, Toronto, Belleville (OHL).

DEFENCEMEN

Dougie Hamilton, Toronto, Niagara (OHL); Scott Harrington, Kingston, Ont., London (OHL); Ryan Murphy, Aurora, Ont., Kitchener (OHL); Xavier Ouellet, Terrebonne, Que., Blainville-Boisbriand (QMJHL); Griffin Reinhart, West Vancouver, B.C., Edmonton (WHL); Morgan Rielly, West Vancouver, B.C., Moose Jaw (WHL); Tyler Wotherspoon, Surrey, B.C., Portland (WHL).

FORWARDS

Anthony Camara, Toronto, Barrie (OHL); Phillip Danault, Victoriaville, Que., Victoriaville (QMJHL); Jonathan Drouin, Huberdeau, Que., Halifax (QMJHL); Jonathan Huberdeau, St-Jerome, Que., Saint John (QMJHL); Charles Hudon, Boisbriand, Que., Chicoutimi (QMJHL); Boone Jenner, Dorchester, Ont., Oshawa (OHL); JC Lipon, Regina, Kamloops (WHL); Nathan MacKinnon, Cole Harbour, N.S., Halifax (QMJHL); Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Burnaby, B.C., Oklahoma City (AHL); Ty Rattie, Airdrie, Alta., Portland (WHL); Brett Ritchie, Orangeville, Ont., Niagara (OHL); Mark Scheifele, Kitchener, Ont., Barrie (OHL);Ryan Strome, Mississauga, Ont., Niagara (OHL).

HEAD COACH

Steve Spott, Waterloo, Ont., Kitchener (OHL)

ASSISTANT COACHES

Mario Duhamel, St-Bruno, Que., Drummondville (QMJHJ), Don Nachbauer, Prince George, B.C., Spokane (WHL); Andre Tourigny, Nicolet, Que., Rouyn-Noranda (QMJHL).

GOALTENDING COACH

Ron Tugnutt, Peterborough, Ont., Hockey Canada.

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Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
The Sun joins Mars, your ruler, in the career area of your chart tomorrow, so you will be even more ambitious than usual. Impress those in positions of power but try not to do so at the expense of other people.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You are up for whatever life throws at you and when the Sun changes signs tomorrow, there will no holding you back. However, after your initial burst of enthusiasm you will need to settle into a steady routine.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
It may at times seem as if the answers are "out there" waiting to be discovered but in reality they are "in here", where facts mean less than feelings. Take time to listen to your inner voice today — it has lots to tell you.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Don't worry too much if you have not been getting along with a certain person of late because you will soon be friends again. You will also find that your opinions were not nearly as far apart as you had previously believed.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You need to get serious about your work and your health. Because everything has been going so well for you of late, you have tended to overlook certain things but now it's time to take care of those boring details.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Do something creative, something that gets you noticed. Everyone was born with an ability of some kind, so focus on your own special talent and make it work for you on all kinds of levels, including financial.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
The next few days are going to be of added importance for family matters. You will certainly find it easier than usual to see the world through loved ones' eyes. Better understanding makes compromise possible.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
However hard you try, you will not change another person's viewpoint. And however hard they try, they will not change yours. So what can you do? You can steer clear of each other as much as is humanely possible.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Over the next few days, your thoughts will turn to what you own, what you earn and, more importantly, how you can start earning more. Get rid of a dozen ideas but the one that remains will make you rich.

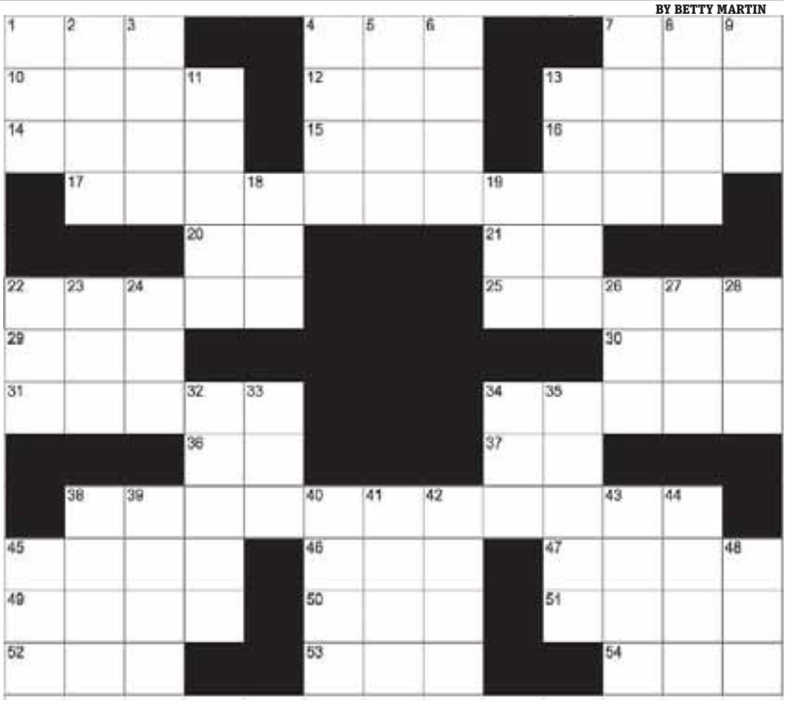
♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
The old solar year is coming to an end and when the Sun moves into your birth sign tomorrow, a new cycle will begin. After the disappointments of recent weeks, it will feel wonderful to know that all things are possible.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Get away for a while. Leave the chaos and confusion of everyday life far behind. Before you go, let someone know that you do not exist to cater to their every whim. You have needs too and they must be satisfied.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Recent cosmic activity has made it possible for you to move up in your work or career. Now you must decide if you are happy with what you accomplished or if you want to go higher still. It's your choice.
SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword

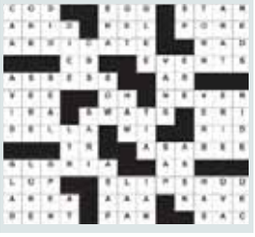
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. Vestment
4. Keyboard key
7. Nickname of comedian Bill
10. One not to be trusted
12. Havana greeting
13. — 70's Show
14. Thin Man's dog
15. Soup container
16. Rodents
17. Stargazers
20. Movie alien
21. Egyptian Sun God
22. Touched by an Angel actress
25. Carry in inventory
29. Pester
30. "Norma —"
31. Tempest
34. Beautify
36. Battery sz.
37. Head out
38. Ethel's partner in hijinks
45. Pitch
46. Gobbled up
47. Tiny amount
49. Police activity
50. Cartoon pooch
51. Barbershop sound
52. Hill dweller
53. CPR specialist
54. Opposite of WNW

Down
1. Chicken – King
2. One of The Simpsons
3. Belfry inhabitants
4. Filled tortilla
5. Star of M*A*S*H
6. U2's lead vocalist
7. Cinders
8. Bran source
9. Ave. crossers
11. Hotel fees
13. Halloween indulgence
18. Road abbr.
19. Robinson or Doubtfire
22. Found in the ER
23. Have a bite
24. Self
26. Gold, to Juan
27. My Mother the —
28. Olin of thirtysomething
32. Participated in a marathon
33. Spring mo.
34. Turkish title
35. Roberts of Everybody Loves Raymond
38. Bank transaction
39. Kind of price
40. Steak order
41. Ledger entry
42. Penny
43. Completed
44. Soul singer Redding
45. La-la lead-in
48. Mimic

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

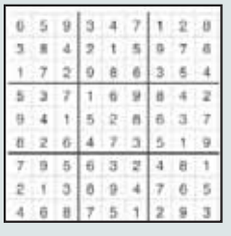
See today's answers metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

	8		6		2		3	
		3	4		1	8		
9								7
		5		1		2		
3								4
		4		3		7		
5								1
		6	8		3	5		
	4		1		9		8	

Yesterday's Sudoku



Weather

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
MAX: 2° MIN: -13°	MAX: -10° MIN: -19°	MAX: -9° MIN: -20°

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GOODNEWSTODAY.CA

HO! HO! HOOOLD ON!

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